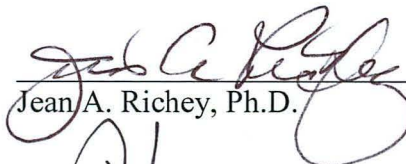


INTERCULTURAL MENTORING: HOW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IDENTIFY AND FOSTER KEY SOCIALIZATION RELATIONSHIPS

By

Elizabeth Anne Rossi

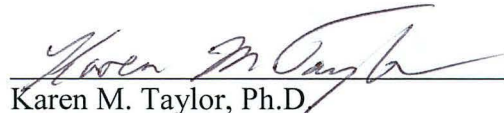
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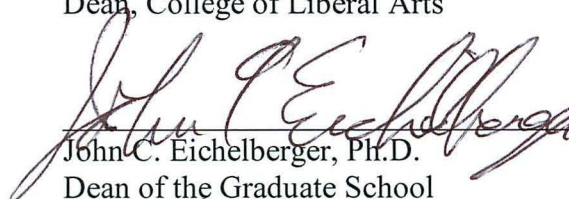


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INTERCULTURAL MENTORING: HOW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
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A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

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MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Abstract

Keywords: mentoring, international, intercultural, organizational socialization

Mentoring is a widely studied relationship because of the critical job it serves for socialization and integration into the university system. Mentoring relationships can serve as sources of academic, social, and emotional support. Support while adapting to a new environment can heighten overall satisfaction an individual feels as well as increase the individual's overall success. Mentoring for domestic students entering the university is clearly valuable, but becomes more complex for international students.

Intercultural communication is an interaction that takes place between individuals or groups who are from different cultural backgrounds. Understanding how diverse our world is can bring better awareness to all who come to the university for learning and teaching. Also, understanding how exchange students from dissimilar countries maneuver throughout the socialization process and how mentors helped can allow organizations to encourage mentoring of international students. This understanding can help faculty and administrators formulate a process where exchange students can rapidly move through the socialization process and become integrated members of the organization.

Although extant research has investigated the ways mentorship can be a helpful resource for newcomers in expediting the socialization process, this particular study looks at how those key relationships were identified and transformed over time. The scope of this research offers the University of Alaska a better understanding of different types of mentors and how they help international students. It also shows how mentorship bonds

are formed and maintained over time between individuals who are from different cultural backgrounds.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Entering into a college environment is an adjustment for most students. Whether they need to alter their lifestyle, study habits or learn how to function without their usual support system present, any or all of these situations together present a challenging time for individuals. This time of change and adaptation is intensified even further for an international student who is coming from another country on an education exchange. Not only do they have to adjust to the above-mentioned variables, but they also face the potential feelings of “culture shock,” communication apprehension and/or isolation. These feelings can lead them to miss opportunities to form connections with some of the greatest resources the university may have to offer.

With the current state of globalization, individuals have access to other cultures more rapidly and frequently. At the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) specifically, the international student base was around two percent in 2010 (for the undergraduate population) and has been growing (UAF Planning, Analysis & Institutional Research, 2013). It is important that we make sure these students receive the type of support and resources necessary to have a successful academic experience while at UAF.

With the rapid growth rate of globalization, everyone is now dealing with intercultural challenges. Mentoring is an important resource that organizations can utilize in helping newcomers become an integrated component of the overall system. The mentoring role allows the socialization of a new member to be expedited more efficiently and effectively. As an outsider, group members who attempt to become an in-group

member of an organization must use cognitive as well as emotional means, which tend to be very stressful (Jablin, 2001). Mentoring scaffolds a support system in academics as well as fulfilling social and emotional parameters for new students. The role mentors play in the overall socialization process of any organization is critical in reducing the ambiguity a newcomer faces in any new environment.

International students have unusual challenges with organizational socialization because of the cultural gaps they may experience in a new environment. This is due to the macro-level normative behaviors of a society that guide, to a certain extent, any organizational culture operating within an overall society. This requires international students to familiarize themselves with the organizational system they are about to enter, and also to understand how the societal culture as a whole operates. This understanding provides a blueprint for how they can incorporate themselves into two partially similar, but separate cultural systems. Mentors are the primary resource by which international students can gain access to information that will allow them to decode that which may be embedded in a web page and other unintuitive resources within the university system.

1.2 Rationale for Study

During my research I found information regarding the socialization process of newcomers to an organization and the ways mentoring can expedite that process effectively. This led me to ponder upon the additional challenges that are present for a student that comes from another country. It was encouraging to find such an ample amount of information about different cultural norms, and to see what research has come in recent decades to discuss a different way of looking at various cultures. I found,

however, that there was a gap in the current literature regarding international students' experience with socialization into a new organization and the ways a mentor may have helped that process.

1.3 Significance of Study

UAF is a research II university with a population of approximately 10,000 students. With a number of graduate programs offered at the university, the graduate level students represent about one-fifth of the total population. This academic institution is the flagship university of the state system that operates branch campuses and distance education programs. The population is majority female at 58% (UAF Planning, Analysis & Institutional Research, 2013) and skews the student age far older than most state universities with an average mean age of over 28 years old. This shows that more than one-third of the student population is non-traditional, receiving a Bachelor's degree at the age of 25 or older. One-fifth of the UAF student population resides on campus, with the remaining majority residing off campus.

My hope is that this research will provide an understanding of what international students experience when coming into new cultural and organizational settings simultaneously, as well as how they draw on their mentors to address the challenges they may face. This understanding is important from an organizational standpoint because an engaged student, international or not, is a successful student. Higher student success rates not only create a positive image of the organization as a whole, but also lead to an increase in enrollment for international students who hear from their returning colleagues what a great experience they had at UAF.

For further information it may be useful to briefly glance at a map on the UAF website (UAF International Programs & Initiatives, 2014) of where international students are from, where research is conducted and our residents that go abroad.



Figure 1.1 “Where we’re from and where we’re going”

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is a process of adapting to a new organization, which leads new members to feel as though they are a part of their new environment (Jablin, 1987). There has been disagreement in research regarding how to label the phases of the organizational socialization process. However, one thing that is clear in all studies is that there are ways to systematically improve the process of organizational socialization, particularly in terms of getting through the potentially negative experiences of the “encounter” phase. This process is an important element of becoming a member of the organization’s in-group because, “as expatriates become acculturated to their host country’s environment, they go through a similar process as individuals entering into a new work environment” (Carraher, Sullivan & Crocitto, 2008, p. 1313). The question is, then, whether international students face an added layer of challenges when entering a new country and organizational environment?

To refer to the process of organizational socialization is, of course, to already necessarily assume that the concept of organizations as cultures is valid. The interest in organizational culture has a wide-ranging body of literature, from business (Schein, 1985) to Anthropology (Geertz, 1973) to Communication (Philipsen, 1992). For the purpose of this project, I work from an ontological stance assuming that organizations are cultures rather than that culture is something an organization can have. Furthermore, it is necessary to note that from this ontological stance, it is believed that individuals will participate to a greater or lesser degree in that organizational culture, but no individual’s

identity is ever entirely enmeshed within a single organizational culture. Lastly, this assumption supports the claim that cultures are adaptive functions that arise in response to organizational environments. As such, organizational cultures cannot be judged as good or bad, and adaptation should be viewed as morally neutral.

2.2 Phases of Organizational Socialization

2.2.1 Anticipation. This is the first phase in the socialization process where new members seek information and form expectations (Jablin, 2001). Information can come in many different forms such as television, magazines and the Internet. Some of the sources one may encounter are not accurate and may create false expectations. For example, many Alaskan movies are filmed in Canada or Colorado to make the area seem more appealing, but offer an unrealistic depiction of what living in Alaska is really like. It is important for prospective international students to know that their sources of information are transparent enough to accurately describe what it will be like and what they can truly expect. This in turn would hopefully decrease violated expectations that may cause isolation and stress.

2.2.2 Organizational Entry and Assimilation. Organizational assimilation is the phase of organizational socialization where new members are no longer considered outsiders of the overall system, but are integrated into that system and are considered members (Jablin 2001). This phase of the process can include: (a) informal interactions where individuals share opinions and knowledge about the organization and (b) a time where each member incorporates unique components of their self into their specific role (Jablin, 2001).

Miller and Jablin (1991) found that, “During the encounter phase of organizational assimilation newcomers depend on information from others to develop role clarity” (p. 93). Miller and Jablin (1991) also looked at the ways in which newcomers to an organization seek information in different ways when in the encounter phase. They found that when individuals enter into a new environment, there is an increase in uncertainty on social, emotional and academic levels. The way that individuals gather information differs and this information serves as a way to decrease uncertainty. The information they gather and whom they obtain it from decreases uncertainty dependent on whom they choose as this vital resource.

Miller & Jablin (1991) offer Information-seeking tactics to include: (a) *Overt Questioning* is directly inquiring about information, (b) *Indirect Questioning* is asking questions in a non-assertive way that requires the other to answer a question that may have only been hinted at instead of being explicitly stated, (c) *Third-party questioning* is seeking out information from someone other than the primary informer, (d) *Testing* is intentionally going against regulations to see what the response is, (e) *Disguising Conversations* using personal stories as a way to gain information about a topic, (f) *Observation* is viewing another to potentially mimic certain behaviors, (g) *Surveillance* is considering information shared and determining what is useful.

Individuals have different comfort levels and strategies when seeking information. It is important to gain awareness of all of the different styles in order to recognize when different communication styles are being used to seek information. At UAF the student population is diverse and non-traditional. This information implies that there will be

many ways in which students are attempting to acquire information campus wide. With the large base of international students coming on exchange every year, it is essential that a wide range of information-seeking tactics can be recognized and properly supported. Jablin's (2001) organizational socialization phases can help show the different stages a newcomer goes through when entering an organization. A way to get through socialization faster is to acquire mentors that are knowledgeable about the organization and the surrounding social environment of the university.

Institutional structures for education create additional information seeking problems because of expectations to take the initiative. Sources of information may not be readily accessible in accordance with each student's information-seeking style. Knowing how to properly search for information or who to ask to acquire such knowledge is crucial to the overall socialization and success of the student.

As a first generation college attendee, I found it challenging to access all of the information I needed in order to have the most productive experience as possible. As one enters into a new environment, is an overwhelming feeling to know that you need to acquire particular information, but cannot easily access it. Much of the necessary information is embedded in the web of the organizational culture and challenging to find on one's own. I spent much time attempting to figure out where certain information can be accessed only to find that it also requires multiple signatures of individuals I still have not met face-to-face or could identify from a photograph. This leaves a feeling of disconnect with the university as a whole for a student who comes in with ambitious

intentions only to become exhausted with the paperwork side of things before instruction for the semester has even commenced.

Staff rather than faculty conduct administrative tasks, but a faculty member specifies the coursework and how to succeed in a class. It then becomes confusing to determine who one should go to seek certain types of information. It is no longer enough to engage in information seeking: one has to know how to find information. The information acquired by information-seeking tactics is helpful in socialization, but the particular type of tactic used can paradoxically be perceived as maladaptive behavior.

2.2.3 Exit. When a student completes their program and is required to return home, a process of detaching from the organization begins. Jablin (2001) refers to it as *organizational disengagement* and offers that it is not only an adjustment period for the individual, but also those members who will remain in the overall organizational system after the individual has departed. The average exchange program at UAF lasts approximately two to five years. In that time, different phases of socialization for each individual are experienced uniquely, but in this extended time frame, bonds are formed and friendships made that will change once constant interactions with each other will no longer be afforded. It is an uncertain time for the international student who must decide what choices to make post-degree. Return home? Stay for another program? Go somewhere else? Seek employment? All of these decisions are life changing and do not give any guarantee. It is also a time when other members who will be staying in the organization will need to make a shift in task-related duties but the social and communicative dynamics will also change.

This phase is not one that happens in a single isolated instance, but over time through sub-phases in the process. It is important to understand and learn about new members' experience, so organizations can remedy any potential barriers to knowledge acquisition and organizational socialization. Role uncertainty and any conflict related to that are found to increase individual's dissatisfaction with the organization and may lead to lack of commitment (Jablin, 2001).

On the contrary, when individuals feel a sense of support, the opposite outcome occurs and those new members feel a sense of loyalty to the organization (Gardner, 2010). Mentoring is one strategy of efficient and effective socialization that has been found to make new members feel confident and competent.

2.3 Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring is a *socialization strategy* that rapidly speeds up the process of making a new member feel as though they are a part of the organizational system (Jablin, 2001). Mentorship by its nature is a relationship meant to pass information to another in the form of tasks and relational support. It requires patience and time commitment from both parties while they strive to proceed more rapidly throughout the socialization process. It would be most beneficial to organizations if they could operationalize mentoring and have a standard set of protocol to utilize when working with students.

Mentoring relationships are valuable resources because it has been found that such relationships that start off in the early stages of socialization decrease the amount of student stress and anxiety caused by large amounts of new information all at one time (Schrodt, Cawyer & Sanders, 2003). Schrodt, et al. (2003) found that "faculty protégés

reported greater levels of satisfaction with the socialization process than non-mentored faculty” (p. 24). When students were asked to describe their mentor relationships, one major theme out of four emerged. It showed that mentors were referred to as family members such as “sibling, big brother, and father” (p. 25).

Overall, a mentor should aid in the proper socialization of new members to the organization. This includes what a new member should and should not engage in with the interest of a successful academic and cultural experience in mind. This requires a student to come into contact with those individuals qualified and willing to share their knowledge base of the organization. Each individual entering a new environment is faced with a certain amount of uncertainty, but knowing personal style and having a set of personal goals in mind will help the organizational members understand expectations and concerns up front. The university as a whole system has normative behaviors, expectations, and rituals, which will help build and sustain the overall culture of the university. Likewise, each department and instructor has his or her own individual set of behaviors, expectations and normative behaviors that one must engage in to be considered a part of the group versus a newcomer.

The advising function has been shifting and now faculty members are in charge of signing off on courses and advising students on what classes to take in order to meet their projected graduation goal. International students may encounter more difficulty whether it is due to language, different prerequisites in their home country, writing styles or just figuring out who to go to in order to complete necessary requirements. It is confusing to know the appropriate person to go to, which is why mentoring is so essential to the

overall success of students. It is within this context that the need for mentoring is so important. It allows the success rates of students to increase while providing a way for faculty to move away from administrative, socio-emotional roles to focus more on knowledge attainment and research projects.

My own experience of coming to the university as a first generation college student was an overwhelming and stressful experience. Although I consider myself to be comfortable admitting when I do not understand something or need clarification, at times the goal of feeling like a member of the university is unattainable. What one person needs and expects is different from another, and by the time I understood what I needed to do socially to get the answers I needed, I barely had enough energy to attend my classes. Once in class, feelings of insecurity were present as instructors encouraged students to participate in class discussions. My first feeling was that I could not communicate at the collegiate level that was perhaps expected of me. After many failed attempts of seeking information that I found maladaptive to my socialization process, I was able to find a few trusted sources to go to when I had questions. However, it was not just one individual I could go to for all things at the university. Many individuals along my academic career have shown empathy and patience to guide me through the various areas of university life, which has taken over five years at the point of me writing this thesis project.

I take my experience and reflect on all of the challenges I faced and overcame. Some challenges were unconquerable so they were abandoned, but the areas of my academic career that have been supported and encouraged have flourished. I cannot help

imagine international students who may have learned English in their home country, but have not integrated it into their daily life. However, these students must encounter the organizational environment as the challenges they face may be magnified.

An article by Bullis & Bach (1989) implies that identification of a new member to an organization (mentee) is associated positively to an organization having control over actions of that individual. The mentor of the new member is the critical middle variable allowing the organization to “step back” and not micromanage each newcomer (p. 203). Those who have been mentored are more apt to have a sense of loyalty to the organization (Schrodt et al. 2003). Schrodt et al. (2003) support the previous statement when they state, “Since faculty loyalty and stability are advantageous for institutions of higher education, [this would] suggest that mentoring has a mutual benefit for both organizations and employees” (p. 26). This is an important benefit of mentoring to look at because the benefits are advantageous for both the mentee and the organization.

Performance is better for those who have a mentor and participation with others in the organization is also more likely. This interaction between mentor and mentee also increased the likelihood of the mentee receiving a promotion (Schrodt et al. 2003). In the same way, we would expect that success for students is similarly likely improved through mentoring. Success for students can mean a variety of outcomes, including higher grades or willingness to take on additional course work. Organizations that educate students in a particular subject matter would already have a socialized member, possibly a new employee, to understand the culture of the particular university because they had direct access to an “in group” member of the organization.

Carraher et al. (2008) share with us the findings of their study on home and host country mentoring. They found that students who have the access to “host-country” mentors are more likely to gain information about the organization as well as share what is learned with others. Carraher, et al. (2008) concluded in that same study “Learning from and working with a host country mentor [leads] to perceptions of being part of an integrated group” (p.1319). Carraher et al. (2008) conducted a study on the effectiveness of mentoring and how an international student can benefit from such an experience. They found that, “mentor’s support in navigating an unfamiliar work environment and culture was positively related to the expatriate’s enhanced performance and promotability” (p. 1320). This suggests that mentoring is a helpful resource for a new student, but also the organization can also benefit from a successful student and heightened performance.

Schwille (2008) concludes, “Educative mentoring is a dynamic, not static, practice that relies on strategic knowledge and judgment” (p. 164). There is not a certain amount of time required for mentor relationships to be productive and beneficial, but the quality of the relationship is the most vital (Jablin, 2001). This approach facilitates a more productive learning environment for students.

Having an open discussion regarding the expectations of both mentee and mentor at the beginning of the relationship is essential so if there are inconsistencies in expectations individuals may find working with someone else to be more beneficial (Boyle & Boice, 1998). Mentoring is an important and necessary resource that leads to a

productive student and a prosperous organization, but it is important to look at the different ways mentoring dyads are constructed.

2.3.1 Formal mentoring. Mentorship literature currently suggests that being formally mentored is more effective than an informal process (Boice, 2000). Formal mentoring is intentionally pairing more experienced cultural members with a new member to enable a sense of belonging (Jablin, 2001). Formal and informal mentoring differs in that formal mentors are selected and trained by organizational members; whereas informal mentors tend not to have any prior mentoring to the relationship (Jablin, 2001).

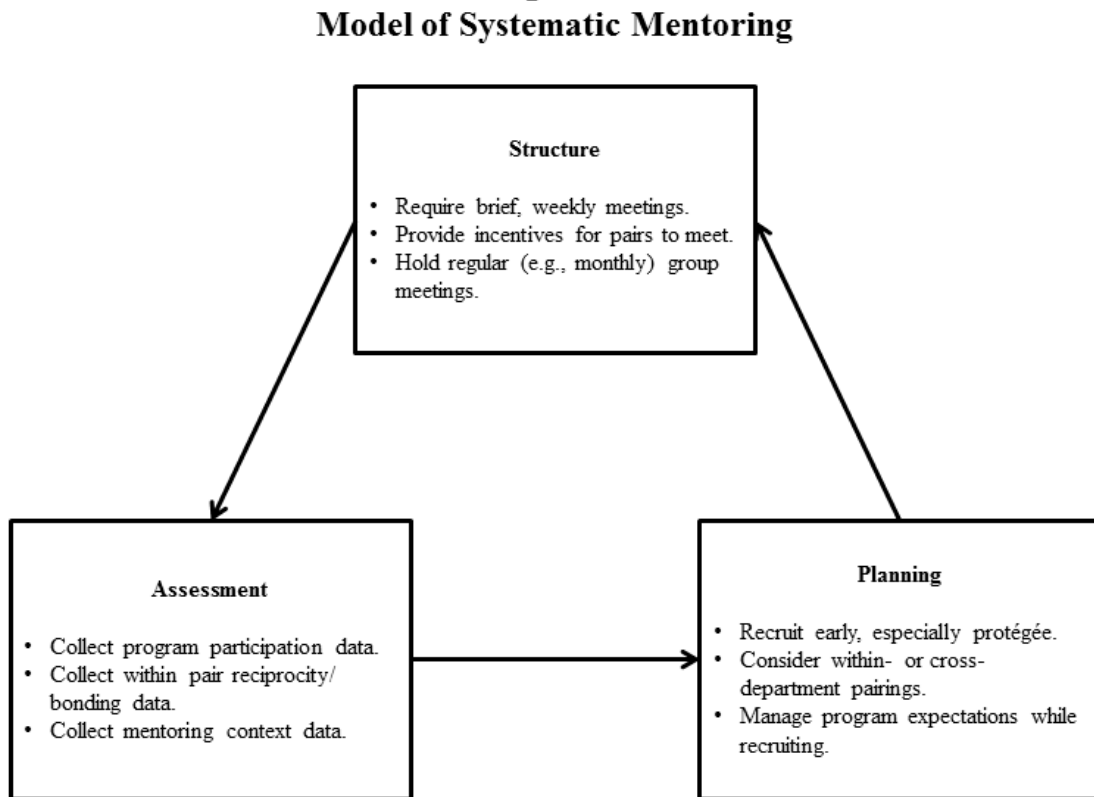
Another study looked at the pairing procedures of formal mentoring programs. Three notions of pairing are discussed in the process of the new member/formal mentor relationship below:

- (a) It is awkward for mentees to pair themselves with a mentor, so offering an individualized way mentors can be found is more adaptable to many different cultural orientations.
- (b) Mentees selecting mentors indicated they were choosing individuals who they previously knew or had heard about, which signals the personal aspect of mentoring.
- (c) Formal mentoring systems can be beneficial if mentors can facilitate a program where individuals are paired up by someone else, taking out the ambiguity and potentially decrease stress in finding a mentor. It also offers each pair to be joined based on unique, individuals (Zimmerman & Paul, 2007).

Interactions over an extended period of time seem to indicate systematic mentoring is a more beneficial form of mentoring (Boyle & Boice, 1998). Formal mentoring programs are meant to provide students ways to obtain satisfying work relationships while also gaining awareness of organizational politics, goals and values (Jablin, 2001).

Boice (2000) conducted a study of formal mentoring between two campuses that studied the procedure used to navigate through the mentoring process. In a study conducted over a two-year period, results suggest that it is more productive to have a set of checks and balances in place in order to productively move through the process. Mentors who have had past experience consider themselves more able to properly enable this process, which is different than others on campus who had less experience. Financial incentives are not the primary driver to get faculty involved in mentoring; it is more about how they perceive their potential in offering guidance to a less experienced individual. One method of research that seemed to yield heightened satisfaction in the mentoring process was the way in which Boice (2000) collected data. Keeping a journal was required to take part in the study, meet routinely one-on-one and also meeting as a large group during a pre-determined time. How could this check and balance be facilitated without a researcher checking in with participants?

Figure 2.1 Model of Systematic Mentoring (Boyle & Boice 1998).



Mentors across departments were rated more effective than those working within the same department. It is important to understand the different types of mentoring and the different purposes they serve to see if a single form of mentoring is most beneficial or a combination of different mentorships that would best help the socialization process of the individual.

2.3.2 Informal mentoring. Informal mentoring is a process where “mentor and mentee ‘find’ each other and offer guidance and advice is exchanged without any pre-arranged schedule or agenda” (Leslie, Lingard, & Whyte, 2005, p. 693). Informal mentors are not specifically assigned by the organization, which may cause added extra

challenges for students who may not feel comfortable enough to approach a mentor to ask for advice. One of the best ways to begin informal relationships with mentors is to meet frequently and communicate with each other (Jablin, 2001). Informal mentorship research is lacking, but so is a primary resource that all interpersonal relationships require such as time constraints as found research where data can be collected over an extended period of time (Jablin, 2001).

Informal mentoring is reported as having a greater degree of fulfillment with psychosocial benefits (Jablin, 2001). Leslie et al. (2005) offer, “All participants described having more than one informal mentor, and a large majority described both collegial and evaluative relationships” (p. 695). Benefits regarding the informal process specifically noted peer based mentoring relationships removed possible power differences (Leslie et al., 2005). Co-mentoring is an increasingly new sub-section of mentoring that takes away a potential power differential while offering different types of support than an administrator or professor might.

2.3.3 Co-mentoring. Rymer (2002) defines co-mentoring as, “peers in a mutually beneficial relationship” (p. 347). A study conducted by Darling, Hamilton, Toykawa and Matsuda (2002) illustrates the cross-cultural comparisons between mentoring in the United States and Japan. Similarities among mentoring characteristics were found suggesting a universal component to mentoring: “These results are especially significant given the differences in the two samples above and beyond culture (i.e., age, major, and type of institution)” (p. 265).

Gardner (2010) supports the need for co-mentors, highlighting the different comfort levels different students may have when talking with members in a university system, “Mentoring programs with more advanced peers should also be established in order to provide the necessary support to students who may not always feel comfortable reaching out to faculty members for assistance, as well as shared office space among students for purposes” (p. 77). They also found: “For the vast majority of the students in the study the central source of support was other students in their program” (p.70).

A study conducted by Holland, Major, and Orvis (2011) found that students who have peer support throughout their experience are more likely to participate in campus wide programs and activities, thus increasing satisfaction with, and commitment to the overall program. Researchers in this study, “identify informal peer mentoring as a relatively low-cost avenue for [students who] may feel unwelcome or out of place” (p. 351).

Which type of mentoring relationship is most beneficial? One that assigns mentor to student, eliminating the time-consuming mentor-seeking process, but perhaps not supplying the student with as much psychosocial support? Or, one that may take a little longer to find a mentor, but it is on the student’s accord to make themselves “present” to the mentor they would like to learn from, thus increasing overall emotional and social support while increasing overall satisfaction with, and identification to, the organization? Or, is it mixtures of both that serve different purposes throughout the students experience at a University? Rymer (2002) posits that both are relevant but at different levels. A

“primary mentor” provides the social-psycho support while the “secondary mentor” focuses on career goals and achievements.

Mentoring relationships that allow open discussion provide a way of learning that benefits not only the mentoring relationship, but the organization, helping it to become a true “learning organization” (Rymer, 2002). According to Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) a learning organization is one that operates on a conscious level at implementing a culture where people of the organization are encouraged to “learn and try new things” (p. 103). This model of learning fosters new ideas to come into pre-existing systems, while constantly adapting and incorporating new ideas to stay up to date in an ever-adapting global economy.

In a study conducted by Boyle & Boice (1998), it seems as though individuals’ positions (new faculty, GTA) matter when setting up mentor pairs. Our expectation regarding research about mentoring applying equally to students is supported by the parallels in the case of graduate students, which have already been researched. They found that certain relationships are more productive cross-departmentally and others are better suited to function within the same department. New faculty members found that it was more beneficial to have a mentor within the same department because the day-to-day tasks and advice necessary was centered on the specific requests related to that particular sub-section of the overall organization. Consequently, to have someone in the same department was more beneficial to gain knowledge congruent with the other members of that group. However, graduate students thought that it is easier to ask and share

information inter-departmentally for fear of being perceived as unintelligent or incapable of understanding.

Informal (“naturally occurring”) mentoring was found to be unbeneficial in a pilot study conducted by Boice (2000). He found that informal “naturally occurring” mentor relationships end prematurely with the frequent excuse from both mentor and mentee being that they do not have enough time to meet enough for the process to be beneficial or productive. Mentees were reluctant to share their mentoring experience with others and as posited by Boice (2000), were concerned about being perceived as an “out performer” (p. 238).

In certain cultures, women are given the rights and privileges of men but in other cultures rigid differentiation is practiced. It could be postulated that a woman from a high power distance culture would have a difficult adjustment period when coming to a place such as UAF where students are encouraged to speak up in class, question the professor, and offer their own opinion. Familiarizing ourselves with the different macro-level cultural orientations could assist as a starting point when learning about different cultures of students that come to this university. Although informal mentoring was found to be time-consuming and a “gamble” at best, the findings from Boice (2000) suggest that a rigid system of checks and balances from an outside source was one of the primary reasons for consistent meetings and participation: “participants told us that when attempting to skip a meeting, they decided it would be less painful to meet their partners on schedule than to explain their ‘sloth’ to us” (p.241).

A retrospective study conducted by an invitation from a senior level faculty member who believed students needed more guidance than previously offered gave insight on how power distance affects the informal mentoring process. Although not conducted as the standard informal mentorship process, the study was labeled as such because the university or other agencies were not funding or requesting such a program. These students mentioned that there were a few components to make this process beneficial such as looking at power differences.

2.4 Culture

Organizations have cultures. Organizational cultures are normative behaviors that distinguish members for one organization to another (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede differentiates from national culture and organizational culture when he offers that national culture is learned from birth and organizational acculturation occurs when the individual enters into the organization, assumingly after their secondary schooling education (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede (2001) warns “Attempting to universalize culture for all organizations is paradoxical as all organizations operate under different foundational values and preconceived cultural environments of host culture” (p. 378). This would suggest that the most beneficial strategy organizations can utilize is to develop their own model of organizational cultural socialization. Hofstede’s theory is beneficial in this aspect because it allows organizations to get an overview of different cultures and when they can get to know their particular new members, and then they can further adapt their strategies to fit the individual.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) offer, “culture is a learned system of meaning that fosters shared identity and community among its group members” (pp. 71-72) in order to show that culture is not something one is born with rather it is something that one is taught from a more experienced individual. Chen and Nakazawa (2009) add, “culture means patterned values, norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and identities shared by members of the same group, even though it is not assumed that culture as a shared system is homogeneously distributed among group members” (p. 80). It is important to keep this in mind when welcoming international students to the university as the linguistic and cultural adjustments they are required to make are intensive compared to the American student who has left home for the first time (Gardner, 2010).

Individualistic and collectivistic cultures disclose at different rates. A higher rate of disclosure (individualistic cultures) seems to indicate an easier time fostering mentor bonds. Cross-cultural studies confirm that self-disclosure events differ across cultural groups such as between individuals from individualistic countries in the West and collectivistic countries in Asia (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009).

The following were found to be variables in intercultural communication that create barriers to relationship development: (a) Identity negotiation and construction, (b) cultural and communication competencies, (c) perceived similarities or commonalities, (d) scope and depth of topics appropriate for discussion, (e) self-disclosure and (f) language proficiency (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). It seems as though these could be potential barriers even with two individuals from the same culture getting to know someone. When cultural variables come into play, these challenges are compounded

because there are more adjustments that need to take place in order to properly integrate into the new university environment.

It is encouraging to read literature that indicates cultural differences are less of a determinant of the relationship than personal differences (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). This information seems to indicate that a similar interest in outdoor activities, for example, has a greater impact on a new friendship than similar cultural backgrounds.

2.4.1 Individualistic. Individualism accentuates separation of the self from others and places priority on personal objectives, self-sufficiency, privacy, and competitiveness (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). Additionally, Hofstede (2001) states, that “Individualism stands for a society in which everyone is expected to look out after him/herself and her/his immediate family only” (p. 225). An individualistic culture varies from a collectivistic culture in the way that they conceptualize themselves in association to others they are surrounded by, whether that is family, friends or colleagues.

2.4.2 Collectivistic. Collectivistic cultural members think of themselves as part of a larger group which aligns the goals of the group above personal gains. As a result, they honor compliance, obligation, allegiance, commitment, respectfulness, hierarchy and shared dependence on each other; and they differentiate amongst in-groups and out-groups (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). Hofstede (2001) states that “Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 225) and linking these two different cultural orientations to communication, individualistic and collectivistic cultures both have instantaneous and

delayed effects when interacting with others (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). The two contrasted terms of individualism versus collectivism are important to understand when attempting to understand culture because conceptualizations of power may vary.

2.4.3 Power Distance. Hofstede (2001) says, “Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful individuals from institutions expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (p. 98). Low power distance cultures have a sense for the need to articulate what they mean through overt, direct communication styles. Equality is a large component of this orientation, where individuals believe it is a right to be able to speak to whomever, however they choose. In a high power distance culture, however, roles are different and the ways individuals communicate with others are closely tied to group harmony and face saving mechanisms. This style of communication follows hierarchical roles and observes traditions and previous experience to facilitate present-day behaviors (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). It is important to understand the preferred communication style of individuals because it gives the host country the opportunity to accommodate the incoming exchange student. Some people are used to being told what to do and how to do it, depending upon the culture in which they were socialized.

Cultural members who have a high power distance may not feel comfortable using a direct, authoritative style with someone in a higher power position. This has an overall effect on the access an international student may have to resources in lower power distance environments. UAF, for example, requires students to have a low power distance level of understanding of how to approach their superiors in a way that will get them access to the resources they need to become effective members of the organization.

Some cultures may use different strategies when dealing with “face threatening” situations. It is important to understand these strategies so others can recognize and not misunderstand an individual’s response (Merkin, 2006).

Knowing how different cultures communicate with their superiors in their home countries offers an understanding of their potential preferred mentoring style. In a study conducted on Mexican workers, it was found that they not only accept an authoritative style of communication, but they actually prefer it because of their cultural background (Madlock, 2012). This factor suggests that it would be beneficial to an organization to familiarize itself with the different ways in which communication occurs in cultures. The strategies involved and why those particular styles are utilized would more accurately describe what students are looking for in a mentor.

2.4.4 Communication. When interacting with people from different cultures it is important not to prematurely stereotype them as shy or withdrawn, too bold, or in-your-face. It just may be that the culture they were raised in fosters that particular style of communication. Knowing these differences can show specific yet equally legitimate ways of communicating across cultures. Trendholm and Jensen (1992) compared American culture to other cultures to show the differences in communication styles as depicted in figure 2.2.

Mainstream American Culture	Other Cultures
Low-context communication	High-context
Communication and language	
<p><i>Explicit, direct communication</i></p> <p>Emphasis on how intention and meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages</p>	<p><i>Implicit Communication</i></p> <p>Emphasis on how intention or meaning can be best conveyed through the context (e.g. social roles or positions) and nonverbal channels (e.g. pauses, silence, tone of voice) of the verbal message.</p>
Communication patterns	
<p>Direct verbal mode: straight talk, self-nonverbal immediacy, sender-oriented values (sender assumes responsibility to communicate clearly. Speaker is responsible for constructing a clear, persuasive message that the listener can decode.</p>	<p>Indirect verbal mode: humbling talk, nonverbal subtleties, interpretive values (receiver of message assumes responsibility to infer hidden or contextual meanings of message).</p> <p>Listener is expected easily to “read between the lines,” to accurately infer the implicit intent of the verbal message, and decode the nonverbal subtleties that accompany the verbal message.</p>

Direct and indirect verbal styles	
Verbal statements tend to reveal speaker's intentions with clarity and enunciated with tone of voice.	Verbal statements tend to camouflage speaker's actual intentions and are carries out with a softer tone.

'Figure 2.2 continued' Cultural Variables in Communication

Cultural comparisons are useful because they show the ways that cultural members conceptualize an idea or concept from an internal thought to an external interaction between people who can hopefully understand the meaning of the message.

Just as the individual is socialized into the organization, the organization itself is a construct of its organizational members. Hofstede's insights are applicable when conceptualizing cultural variations, although the critiques are labeled by some as over-generalizing. These over generalizations were recognized by his dichotomous theoretical concepts, making it seem to some as though a culture could be only one or the other. Hofstede is useful, but he essentializes culture in a binary fashion in which any individual could neatly fit cultural descriptors as a whole. This is not realistic. Hofstede's cultural variables are more useful for an individual getting socialized into an organization simultaneously when ample amounts of time are not afforded to get to know each idiosyncrasies of each new individual. Even if international students do not exhibit orientations initially, they will be reinforced through assumptions given by Hofstede and will manifest due to cues given by socializing agents. If organizations can familiarize themselves with the cultural variables facing students entering into the university setting,

they will also be able to better educate university in-group members on how roles can be negotiated. This effective role negotiation would aid in expedited socialization into the organization.

Role negotiation may not always be utilized for prediction or control, but it can be useful for understanding how diverse student populations have become and as a resource for role negotiation. Although an individual can be socialized to change their observable behaviors, it does not mean their internal cognition is altered (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). It is also important to note that even members that have been in a culture since birth may never fully find that they enact every variable in the way their culture is described. As a consequence, they may find living in any culture is a unique experience for each individual (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). This suggests that it is not feasible with the time constraints prescribed by life and institutional program timelines for individuals to attempt to fully assimilate into each culture in which they find themselves. It is more realistic to find an individual who can provide newcomers with necessary information and knowledge to help them adapt to their unique lives. Once more, the mentor can serve as a check and balance for the individual throughout their socialization process. Assimilation is not an end state, but rather a phase in the socialization process that gives the individual the opportunity to individualize their role within the organization.

Hofstede (2001) lays out cultural differences without considering an individual's experience. Hofstede's descriptions outline what we would expect to see, but we find instead that the cultural setting in a student's academic department may have the most significant influence on their overall socialization into the university. Personal identity

influences the behaviors individuals use to communicate with others (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). When developing a relationship with strangers, adapting to a new culture or helping someone adapt to a new setting, it is important to understand that each individual brings a unique montage of cultural variables, personal idiosyncrasies, and expectations to the intercultural arena (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). To adapt to a new culture can be overwhelming and stressful, even if the same language is spoken between the two cultures.

2.4.5 Intercultural Communication Competence. Intercultural communication competence (figure 2.3) is the ability to enable communicative exchanges to prompt a certain reply (Chen & Starosta, 1998). This is not only a definition for an individual entering a new environment but also for those who are members of an environment coming into contact and interacting with others from different cultural backgrounds. *Culture-specific* is a term that means detailed information about the culture one must know to interact with other individuals. In contrast, *Culture-general* is a term used that only requires “a broad overview of all cultures and calls for the individual to interpersonally become aware of their mental frames of reference and information processing” (Hofstede, 2001). DeCaro (1995) and Trendholm and Jensen (1992) show us the differences between cultures with their east-west communication competency models. The following models show differences between cultures that offer a way to familiarize oneself with internal and external ways of conceptualizing the communication processes of individuals.

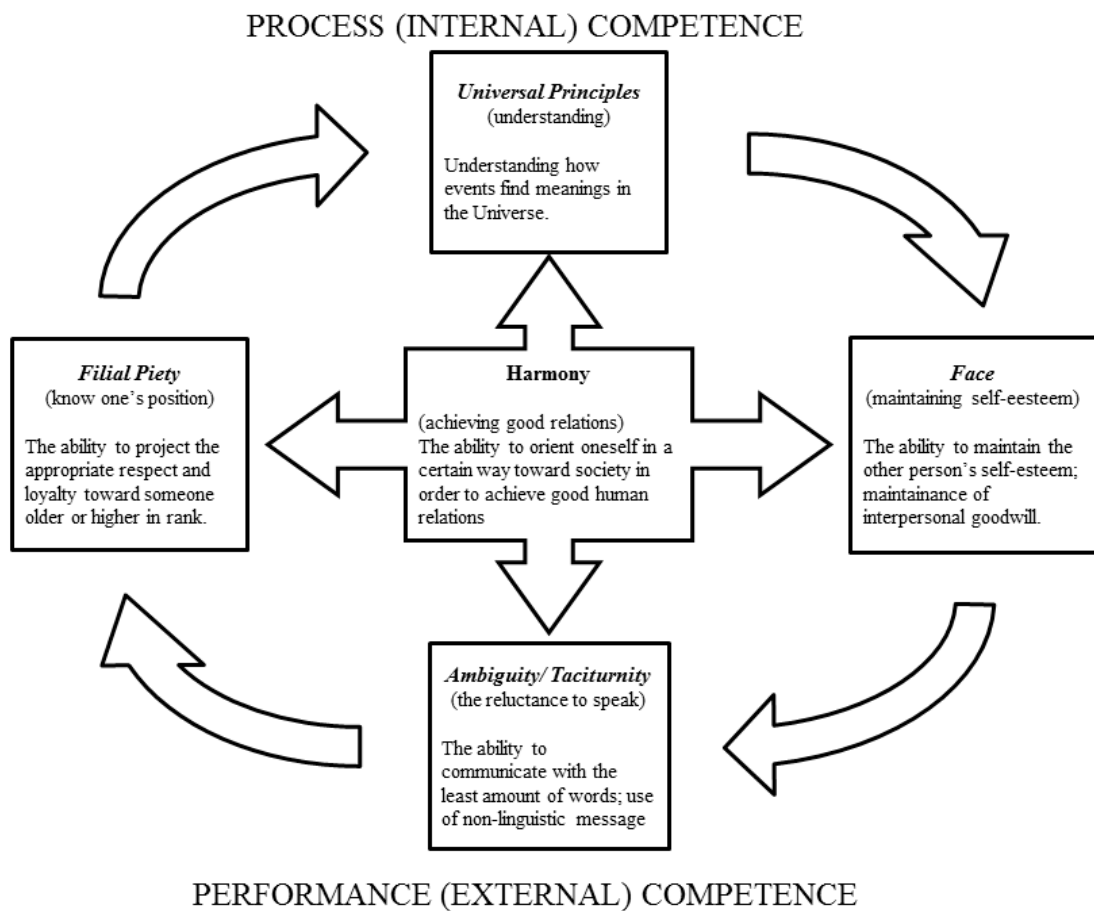


Figure 2.3 Intercultural Competence for Eastern Cultures, DeCaro, P. (1995).

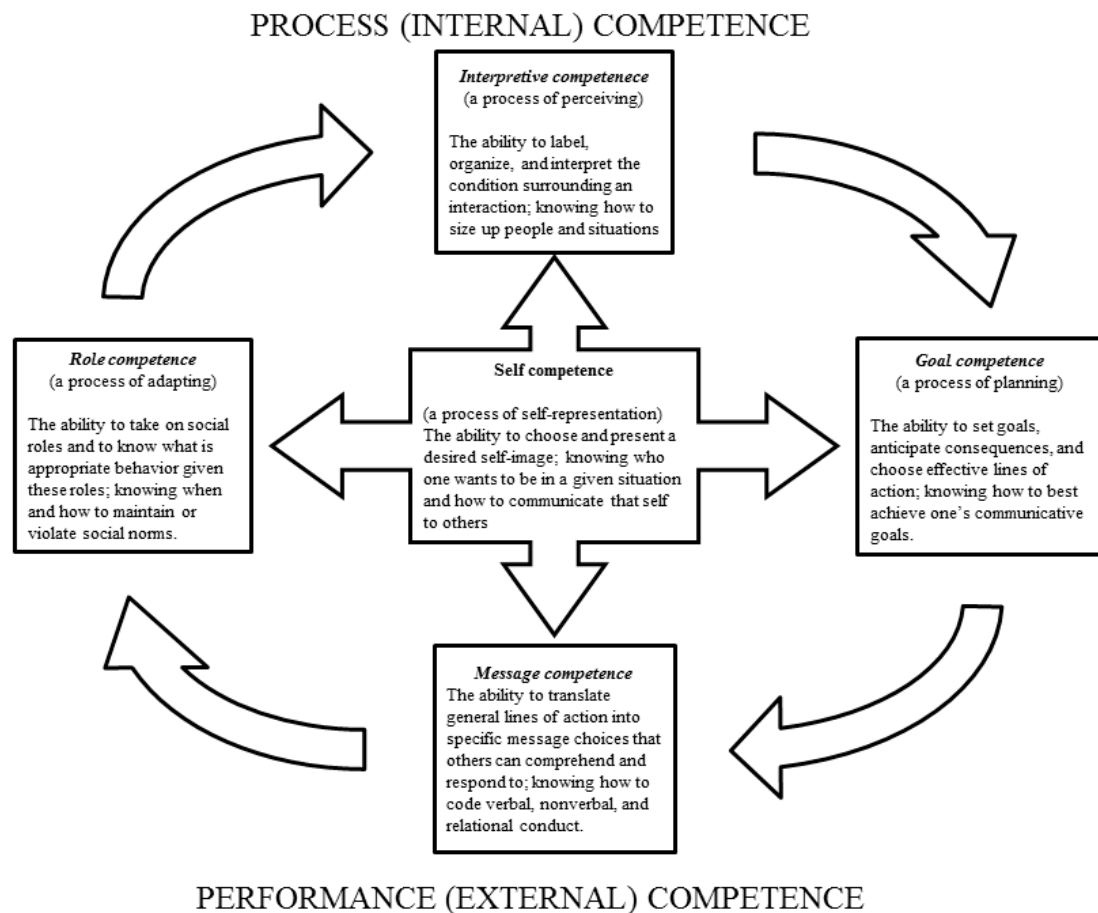


Figure 2.4 Intercultural Competence for Western Cultures, Trendholm and Jensen (1992).

Both models are beneficial tools that allow an individual to look at the host culture on a macro-level, while also allowing them to take the time to intrapersonally reflect on how they can become more interculturally competent and make themselves aware of personal impediments to the process.

It is critical that whether it is an organization getting ready to welcome a new semester of international students or the exchange students themselves, we all understand the crucial component that helps us and impedes our ability to understand each other;

language is the most imperative resource we use to translate internal ideas to outward communication with others (Chen & Starosta, 1998). Chen & Starosta (1998) state “Language affects the way we think, our attitudes, our behavior. Our inability to understand each other verbally may lead us to avoid others or to place a lower value on another’s ideas” (p. 147). Language allows individuals to communicate with one another and this communication helps develop social identity and the feeling of belonging to a particular social group (Ting-Toomey & Korzenny, 1989). English is not usually the primary language for an international student coming to the university, and knowing at what level that is affecting their communication process within this new system, will help integrate newcomers into the UAF culture. Gudykunst (1989) offers that once an individual is aware that they belong to a social group, their self-identity can then start to form.

2.4.6 Adaptation. International students coming to UAF are generally attending a form of education exchange, which will require them to return to their home country upon completion of their program. Certain individuals will find it beneficial to immerse themselves in the new culture while holding on to their cultural roots. As discussed in Gudykunst (1989) the following terms delineate the adaptation process: this notion of inclusion is called the integration process (Gudykunst, 1989). For some, it may not seem beneficial to give up their cultural orientations because the length of time they will spend in a different culture is not long enough to justify sacrificing particular areas of their selves. This form of adaptation is referred to as separation. This separation turns into segregation when members of the host country appear as though they do not want to

interact with those from other cultures. When international students give up their cultural backgrounds and do not attempt to integrate new cultural principles of the host country into their life, it is referred to as marginalization (Gudykunst, 1989).

It is important to understand the ways individuals adapt to different cultural settings, so it can be recognized when a student may attempt to adapt to a new culture. As Rajasingham (2003) suggested, “All educational systems are communication systems, special kinds of communication systems in which teachers interact with students to help them apply knowledge to problems” (p. 416). This knowledge application is the reason understanding different cultural variables is vital to consistent and efficient education.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

This literature review covered ideas about becoming a new member of an organization, differences between cultures, and how communication affects the overall process of entry into an organization. This literature has set the foundation for this study’s research questions, which facilitated the research.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

After analyzing extant literature I was able to formulate my research questions.

RQ1: How do international students identify and foster mentoring relationships when they come to UAF?

RQ2: What, if any, are additional challenges faced by international students when coming to college at UAF?

I conducted conversational interviews to generate and analyze primary data sources for this study on mentoring relationships with students in a collegiate level of education, exploring the socialization process that each international student experiences. Relationship formation at the encounter phase is important, but so is maintaining the relationship over a period of time. Looking at this subject within a particular context, it is important to understand individuals' life experiences and the depth of that situation in order to gain a better understanding of a dynamic interaction between two people.

3.2 Theoretical Perspective of Interpretivism

According to Locke, Silverman and Spirduso (2010) interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that aims to, "Understand the setting for social action from the perspective of the participants" (p.184). Simultaneously incorporating elements such as "thick description," providing a context for each interview and reflecting on one's own biases as the researcher all aid in providing a valid and reliable qualitative research project.

I utilized the interviewing process as a method of data collection in order to gain insight into the research participants' experience that would otherwise be unavailable to

the external observer. This method gave useful insight into another's understanding or feeling towards a particular situation or circumstance. Understanding is the key element of qualitative research, as it allows for a perspective that may have not been considered before.

Intercultural communication requires careful listening and checking back in order to develop a mutual, human understanding apart from the researcher's or communication's or literature's perspective. This methodology traces implicit reasoning into overt actions that can be observable to the public eye, but the meaning may be misinterpreted. Interviewing adds depth to the scientific process as it shows why something was done, perceived a certain way, or analyzed under a particular lens.

3.3 Method: Interviews

Semi-structured, conversational interviews were utilized to allow for less rigid forms of knowledge acquisition. The same questions were asked of all participants in the same sequence, but some questions did not have to be explicitly asked by me, the researcher, because the co-researcher (the participant) had answered those questions within a different one. Additionally, follow-up probe questions gave access to additional reports of information that would have not otherwise been articulated in the interview. For example, when a co-researcher would report on a particular mentor they met at the university, when something was mentioned about going to the gym with their mentor, I would ask a probing question such as: "So you say your mentor made you feel like you were "back home". What does "back home" feel like? Probing questions such as these would allow me a deeper understanding of how the students' mentors made them feel

comforted in an unfamiliar environment. This method of semi-structured interviewing also gave the interview an opportunity to open up different ways of exploring this particular phenomenon within the boundaries of the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The how of semi-structured interviews more closely approximates normal turn taking in conversations and, as a result, this “interviewing” approach provokes greater trust and more engaged responses.

3.4 Epistemological Contexture of Constructionism

The researcher and co-researcher each bring their own framework of how they interpret life events into any research project. It is that framework that provides us with meaning and understanding of events that occur. Constructionism requires interplay between a co-researcher and the researcher who work together to create a deeper understanding of an unstudied phenomenon. As a researcher, it is valuable to understand the social responsibility of those who participate in qualitative research. It is from that understanding it is also critical to be aware that as individuals we naturally become saturated in our home societies (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and that saturation creates a bias that even the best researchers cannot entirely eliminate from their research.

3.5 Philosophical Perspective of Phenomenological Ontology

The goal of the phenomenological methodological ontology is to capture the “essence” of the phenomenon or experience lived by another individual (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). Even with the best of intentions, it is impossible to remove all traces of the researcher from the study. Although one cannot fully approach research through a

purely objective lens, there are ways to acknowledge perceived potential biases, which in turn heighten the overall credibility of the researcher.

Researcher reflexivity (Lindlof & Taylor (2002) is a process that researchers should engage in to properly make themselves aware of all the biases they may bring to the research project. We report on research through our own cultural, social, economic, linguistic lens while funneling another's experience through it (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 179). Including reflexivity in the written output improves the credibility of the researcher. Explicit acknowledgment of reflexivity also gives the reader an opportunity to consider for themselves their own view as well as that of the researcher instead of pondering the many ways this research could have been perceived while reading the reach report.

3.6 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

Qualitative research requires the researcher to constantly reflect on their work and seek alternative ways of viewing data. This “reflexive” process (Ellingson, 2009) requires “consideration of the researcher’s self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and representation” (p.10). Crystallization is used as an extension of triangulation as used in social sciences research for validity that gives rigor to a study. Triangulation is incorporating particular elements into research such as keeping a detailed journal throughout interview, having credible sources check your work, and transcribing are ways to immerse oneself in the data. Crystallization and thick description are two major components of the reflexive process of qualitative research that increase both validity and reliability of the study: since the researcher is constantly looking at different

ways that data could be interpreted, they have a heightened awareness of how the researcher affects the research process (p.15).

Using crystallization allows the researcher to explicitly state the biases they bring to their research (p.10), but it also helps them to understand that this kind of study offers a more in-depth understanding (p.17). Because the researcher is aware of their shortcomings, they cultivate credibility (p.10). Furthermore, “crystallization continually turns back upon itself, highlighting its own construction by showing that no one genre offers truth” (p.15), which perpetuates and encourages a variety of interpretations.

One way to engage in proper crystallization is to “thickly describe” (Creswell, 2013) the setting of the event as detailed as possible to “produce[s] for readers the feeling that they experience, or perhaps could experience the events described” (p.235). It is understood in the qualitative research community that “the more empathetic detail that goes into an ethnographic description, the richer our understanding will be and the more valuable that account will be for its readers” (p.47). The more detailed an event can be described, the more “thick” it becomes. If the researcher has written thoroughly, the “thick description” provides a sense of imagery and tone for the reader (p.235). Thickly describing an account takes out ambiguity and vagueness. It is crucial in qualitative research to properly represent the setting and atmosphere that are experienced during a certain event. Engaging in this component of qualitative research heightens credibility because it shows that the researcher is aware of the importance of properly describing the environment in which the events occurred, and thereby conveys the understanding that environments have an effect on the research process.

3.7 Objectivity and the Researcher as Research Tool

In qualitative research the researcher is considered an actual tool in the process because they are the key element of data collection. A particular object can be used to collect the data, but the researcher actually gathers the information (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the researcher should try to gain insight regarding their own misconceptions and biases. The qualitative interview is a method that allows for inconsistencies to be discussed and changed through the interactions with the co-researcher, who has the ability to challenge the researcher's assumptions. This opens up a dialogue and contributes a more objective standpoint of qualitative research. The level of validity and reliability of a qualitative research project is directly related to the level of interactional checking and awareness the researcher incorporates into a study.

3.8 Participants and Procedures

For this study the following demographic characteristics were noted: (a) gender (b) age (must be over 18 years), (c) geographical origin (d) education level, and (e) previous travel abroad (which could potentially influence adaptation). Second, this study included gathering 12 to 15 participants for the interviewing section through snowball sampling, as recommended by Creswell (2013) because it "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (p. 180), creating a "participant link." Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) specify that an interview load for participants "tends to be around 15+/-10" (p. 113). Third, informed consent forms (Appendix A) were signed and acknowledged by the participants, and, at any time, participants had the option to withdraw from the study.

Nine of the 14 participants were from East Asian countries, six male and three female. Five of the 14 participants were from Western European countries, three females, and two males. The two main participants who were my anchors for snowball sampling were my starting points for data acquisition. It was important for me to have participants from as many diverse regions as possible to be as representative of the diverse student population at UAF as possible. A total of 14 international students agreed to participate in the study, from multiple departments on campus.

As a researcher, I took the time to reflect on any biases I might bring to the interview that could affect the overall study. I kept in mind that every participant and I would not share the same primary language and to stay as aware as possible that what I was saying was clear and to not use slang terms as they could be misinterpreted and create an awkward environment to conduct the interview. I also kept in mind the different cultural orientations I have learned about and tried to respect and accommodate each participant as much as possible.

3.9 Methods of Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis began in the initial stage of planning the interview by designing questions around the central theme of international mentoring within the university (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Uncovering themes in interviewee responses required credible ways to analyze the data, which is why I utilized coding.

I coded interview texts, which involved assigning words and phrases related to the data I collected (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Coding each interview allowed me to clearly represent the themes that reoccurred amongst interviews. Coded phrases

simultaneously allowed me to develop tentative explanations linking between words of interviewees and the worldview of normative theories such as Jablin is (who conceptualized experiences relating to a particular model what was happening in the interviewee's specific situation.) Codes are helpful in conducting thematic analysis, though they are not the only method available. Another method I used was "meaning condensation" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This method allowed me to paraphrase text from interviews into only the essential meaning of the message.

It is relevant to combine the socialization phase, culture, and mentoring experience to consider because of the dynamic interconnectedness each variable has with the other. The University of Alaska is a proper population for understanding international mentoring because of the naturally diverse student body inducted into the university through a multitude of programs. This university hosts international students from all over the world at multiple levels of academia.

Chapter 4: Interviews

For the interviews, I had two initial participants that were my starting points in relation to my snowball sampling method. One of the participants is from China and the other from Denmark. From here, I was able to make contact with other international students based on the recommendation and contact information from one of my two starting participants. I will group the interviews in the order in which they were conducted, while also specifying which initial participant they were referred by.

4.1 Lynn's Interview

Lynn is a woman from China. She had been in Fairbanks for one year at the time of interview. For the interview, we met at a local Thai restaurant, which was at her request. The interview was conducted in the late afternoon during the summer month of August. There were a few other diners at the restaurant so there was a comfortable amount of background noise and half wood walls sectioned off where we were seated, and we were right by a window so we had a view of the road. We ordered appetizers and Thai iced tea before the interview questions began. We discussed how our summers have been and when our tea arrived, and then the interview began.

The first question of all my interviews was how the student prepared for their experience at the university. Lynn watched lots of movies that had Alaska in the title and also a friend who had been to Alaska before. The friend who had been to Alaska gave Lynn information on the weather, living on campus and making friends. When I asked about her expectations of the area before coming here, Lynn reported that she thought Alaska would look “Really pretty, I would meet new friends every day and party all the

time.” I then asked her what it was actually like once she encountered Fairbanks, Alaska and the University environment. Lynn shared that “It wasn’t pretty everywhere, it was a normal city” and transportation was not as convenient as expected. Also, unexpected was the challenge of making friends, which she attributed to the dorm structure of where she lived (separate dorms versus apartment-style living). Lynn mentioned that once she got to the university, there was a lack of Chinese “community” on campus (studying versus socializing), which is different than in China where “All friends are together all the time.” After this comment she mentioned that she understood. For example, she said, “They came here to study not to hang out with friends.”

Before I asked students about the power distance differential between their home country and UAF, I defined power distance and ask if the way that I described the term is understandable. For each (high and low power distance), I provided examples of interrupting a teacher to challenge them or getting up in the middle of class to leave the room (pertaining to low power distance) and not speaking up in class or leaving in the middle of a lecture to use the restroom or eat a snack to relate to high power distance. Lynn described her education experience back home as “Strict . . . teachers are really direct and criticize you in public all the time.” Lynn reported that UAF is “really different than China.” In China she reported being “naturally afraid of teachers who threaten to talk to your parents ever since entering school in Kindergarten. This is the communication style. Teachers make me nervous. There is a big power distance.”

The mentoring section for the interview started with me defining what mentoring is (formal and informal) and how individuals can have more than one mentor for different

areas of their lives. Lynn reported that the person she thought of when I said the word mentor was informally introduced into her life. Lynn shared, “UAF is an international campus so the university seems generally used to interacting with other cultures.

Although we don’t have like classes or anything to mentor to get the mentoring but then through the daily details we actually got a lot.” The departmental administrative assistant was named as Lynn’s mentor both for task-related purposes and social and emotional support. Lynn said that over time through small talk, she was able to feel closer to her mentor:

She’s different, she’s not one of the professors. If it is a professor you feel kind of distant or you feel like, oh, I haven’t done the homework yet so when I see her I feel nervous. I don’t have to report to my mentor or anything, she’s there to help me, like a mom, less pressure.

I then asked a question about the frequency of their contact and Lynn stated they talk every day that we are in school, face-to-face communication and “Email is for business.”

Then, I asked about future intentions to stay here in Fairbanks after their program is complete or go back home. Lynn reported that she may stay here with her boyfriend and new friends, but going home would be good too because all of her family is there. This has been Lynn’s first experience with an exchange program. She had never left China before this experience. After the interview was complete, I asked if she knew any other international students who may be willing to participate in my study. She said she did and she would get back to me with their contact information, introducing me to seven

international students from China and one from Switzerland which are included in the following interviews.

4.2 Joyce's Interview

Joyce, a 26-year-old woman from Denmark, was my other Anchor in relation to the snowball sampling method. She is originally from Denmark, but just came from an urban environment in London. She has been in Fairbanks for one year at the time the interview took place. This interview was conducted late morning at Barnes and Noble bookstore in the month of September. It was an overcast day with light rain. We waited in line at the coffee shop to each get tea. We both paid for our own beverages and then took a seat in large, overstuffed lounge chairs by the fireplace. After I went over the consent form with Joyce and asked if there were any questions, we began the interview. Before arriving in Fairbanks, Joyce used Google maps as a way to get the scope of the community. With this search she found that it was a small city and there would be certain amenities she would not have access to, such as keeping up with false eyelashes. This was not of great concern, however, and the climate was not either because she had lived in Greenland when she was younger, and felt the climates were similar enough for an easy adjustment. Joyce did research on the University and found the web page for the UAF international department. A manager by the name of Erika helped Joyce with the step-by-step tasks related paperwork necessary upon arrival in the area. After I asked as to why Erika was perceived as such a help, Joyce reports "she was just there" and would give her resources such as a guide to Fairbanks.

Joyce's overall expectations of the area were that "people would be nice" and the area was rural and low key in comparison to the city she just moved from: "You don't just do down and get a Mani-Pedi here." Joyce did not expect a big city because of her previous research on the area and was aware that subsistence living was a way of life for people here. Joyce said, "You would never call anyone Dr. It's just weird. I knew from movies and books that was the norm in America."

Joyce arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska in the summer, and described the climate as "hot as hell." She took a cab from the airport and after seeing "trees, fields and nothing else" thought "all right where is everything else?" Joyce explained to me that as an international student, you are required to check in to the international office within forty-eight hours of arriving in Fairbanks. When Joyce got to the department to check in, an international officer by the name of Erika showed her all of the necessary paperwork to fill out. Joyce reported that they "talked about everything and nothing" and that Erika made sure Joyce had food and she was getting settled. "It was really nice to have that."

After exploring around campus, Joyce ventured into town and shared that she "expected there to be more of a downtown," but specified that now that she has spent a winter here in Fairbanks she "understands now in winter you can't walk around. Fairbanks is divided. You have to have a car to get around."

It was important for my study that I defined power distance as closely as possible for all of the interviews I conducted. As a result, I used the same set of notes with the definitions provided. After I read the definition and gave examples of each, I asked the

co-researcher if they had any questions. Joyce was familiar with these terms and said that she noticed at UAF:

You call them Dr. and then their last name. Back home I can't remember their last name, I always called them by their first name. You would never call anyone Dr. it's just weird. Erika told me of some of the norms here at the university. I was a little more polite over here to cover my bases. Higher power distance here the titles create a power distance even though it's not intended, doing it naturally creates a power distance. At least I think so. America is divided culture, I'm a doctor, I'm a nurse, and have categories for each. Back home we do too but we don't set them up against each other like that.

Her perception of the UAF culture compared to back home was that UAF enacts a higher level of power distance. Joyce goes on to argue, "it's not bad, just different."

As the researcher, I transitioned into mentoring by saying that there are different types of mentoring and gave definitions and examples. Joyce named Erika, the international officer, as her "go to person." If I wasn't bold enough to email her, I'd be all alone." Joyce took this experience as a way to reflect and think about other international students. She shared with me that she has traveled a lot and understands the importance of being aware of different cultures because of her experiences, "Without that I would have been lost." Joyce also named another international officer, Donna, who also helped her with all of her paperwork: "I see them as professional mentors."

For Joyce, another person that stuck out in her mind when I said the word mentor was the "secretary in the department." When I asked Joyce what it was about this

particular individual that set her apart from others she replied, “She was always right there. Has a bubbly personality. Helped me with paperwork, there is something with her personality. She’s like our mom. I disclosed my feelings when I was sad. She’s really my personal mentor.” It is because of this particular mentor, that Joyce believed she did not need others (international office) as much. I then asked how frequently they interact with each other and Joyce replied, “I see her every day, and small chat. We are friends on Facebook, we both love shoes. We always talk about everything and nothing (emails for school), she disclosed personal information to me (when her dog passed away).” Joyce states that although she and this individual have a personal and professional relationship she is fully aware that there are “borders but they have never been spoken of.”

After the mentoring section of the interview, the conversation naturally came to an end. I asked about future plans upon completion of her program. Joyce said she is “open to whatever right now, wherever the opportunity arises. I would be willing to stay in Fairbanks or travel to China, depends on where I am emotionally.” Because she has traveled frequently prior to this experience, Joyce reported understanding different cultures as a strong component of her experience here at UAF. When I asked if she knew anyone who would be willing to participate in my research, Joyce said that she knew of an international student who just arrived in Fairbanks from Russia and also a friend of hers, an international student, who is from Switzerland. Joyce forwarded me their contact information and the gentleman from Russia was available first for the interview. The participant from Switzerland would not be available until later in the semester.

4.3 David's Interview

I made first initial contact with David, the man from Russia, via email and we decided to meet in the Department of Communication. From there we would figure out a place to conduct the interview. As mentioned earlier, David had just arrived two weeks prior and wanted to explore the campus a bit more. We walked through the Rasmuson library, engaging in conversation about classes, how his experience had been so far, and we ended up down by the costume room near the theatre department. I am familiar with this area as I used to go to Summer Fine Arts Camp, and David liked the environment because of the “graffiti-like” personalized artwork of anyone who had access to a piece of chalk. We sat on a bench face-to-face and started the same protocol I engage in before every interview; going over the consent form, asking if there are any questions, and then proceeding with the interview after the participant signed and dated the form.

David prepared for his experience in Fairbanks by searching on Google maps. David enjoys inline skating so he specifically looked for places that he could engage in that activity. Also David looked for a health food market to get his protein powder. Although David reported that he has watched television shows such as Alaska State Troopers and Surviving Alaska, he said he, “refrains from watching, they give a ‘hype’ sensationalized view of reality.” He thought that Fairbanks would be a rural area. David shared that he did not have a “particular pattern of expectations, but envisioned “fresh air, nature, mountains, beautiful but cold during winter.”

Once he actually arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska, he found the area to be “impressive and humbling. Everything is far apart (houses). Beautiful.” After this response, this

segment of the interview trailed off as David indicated that he just got here and has not really had time to experience the area. I then defined power distance, provided examples, and moved on to this portion of the interview. When I asked David how he perceived the power distance at UAF in comparison to his experience he replied, “UAF is comparable to Holland.” especially in his department. In Holland the shared power distance is “low, no formal even to a boss. No titles.” If he compared it to his education in Russia, however, he thought UAF had a lower power distance than he experienced there.

There was a professor in the department he was about to enter at UAF who David was in contact with via email. He believed they had shared commonalities and that created an easy transition once he arrived in Fairbanks and met the professor face-to-face. Before arrival they would email about once per week and now he sees her almost every day. According to David, “Try to communicate and adapt to customs in department to adapt and get into family, but don’t want to force it.” David referred to the administrative assistant, “more as a mom. She has helped a lot with groceries and activities (working out).”

These two mentors were named, but I was curious if he had anyone back home who had helped him get to Fairbanks, or whether he is still in contact with anyone there in the form of mentored support. As he just arrived in Fairbanks two weeks ago, I reiterated the definition of mentorship and asked if there was anyone else who came to mind when I mentioned the word mentor. David said he had a professor who helped him become aware of the “informal Alaskan culture compared to other parts of America.” I asked further as to how his professor became knowledgeable with American culture and

David stated that his professor was originally from Louisiana. It is because of this professor that David came in to contact with the program here at UAF. He still talks to this professor via Skype since arriving in Fairbanks. When I asked David about his plans for the future upon completion of the program, he said he has not thought about what he will do as “real life does not mimic projected time frames, but wherever opportunity is.”

The next person Joyce put me in contact with via email was not available until the end of October for an interview. The interview was conducted in the speaking center at UAF, as I was unsure of the comfort level of new participants and wanted to create a neutral, safe environment with minimal distractions. It was late morning and the sun was out, creating a warm climate outside.

4.4 Lori's Interview

Lori is a twenty-nine year old woman from Switzerland “more urban suburban just outside of city limits with access to urban environment thirty minutes away.” Before coming to Fairbanks, she asked her godmother who has traveled to Alaska what it was like, but Lori was aware that “to be a tourist is different than living here.” Lori has spent two years in Fairbanks. Lori shared that she actually spent one semester at UAF and went back home to graduate. There was an opportunity to come back to UAF for graduate studies and so now she has been here for one and a half years. Lori said, “I expected more rural things, Fairbanks is still a rather big city compared to European ‘cities’. I expected lots of outdoor things to go on but once I got here, there was lots going on during the beginning of the semester.” She compared UAF semesters and European semesters at the university level. In Europe, she described a semester in which

they “don’t do anything” and final exams are worth 100 percent of their course grade so there is an intense time of studying for those exams at the end of semester, but more time was available for extra-curricular activities. She expected that same “template” for the semester at UAF, thinking there would be more time to travel here, but “here students always have to hand in things. Difference in time management.”

Lori was familiar with power distance when I mentioned the term but I still defined both high and low to specify how I was using the term for my research. Compared to her other university, she said the distance at UAF is lower: “we are closer to professors here due to German distinctions. You would never call a Professor you formal because it is too informal. When you are a kid you use a more formal form with an adult and in formal settings like university, you always use ‘vu’.” At UAF, professors have told Lori she can call them Professor or by their first name: “I think this sounds so wrong, but it makes us seem closer. So, it’s hard because I think of how I would react if we talk in different language. One of my committee members is Swiss and when we speak French its weird because saying his first name in English is totally normal, but when you change language you feel it’s wrong. I’m not as open with someone when I speak German or French because there seems to be more distance.”

Lori reported several individuals who she thinks of as mentors, none of whom were formally assigned. She specified a PHD student who “took me under her wing. More of a friend mentor. It’s easier talking to someone who is not from here who shares similar experience. You may just offend someone if you say certain things.” Lori shared that she talks to this “friend mentor” on a daily basis.

The next individual Lori named, as a mentor was her professor. She postulates, “Maybe it’s because we are both from the same country.” I then asked how this relationship has developed over time. Lori said that it was just “over time, nothing that specifically happened. Just got more comfortable the more we talked about school project and Fairbanks, how I feel as an international student, my future. I talked more to him, he understand what’s going on.” One thing Lori articulated to me was that after she met her professor’s family, who also spoke French, it helped “make a big difference” in making her feel closer to something in the Fairbanks community other than school. Lori said, “Now I’m part of a department, there are people who want to interact with me, but before for my semester-long undergraduate experience at UAF I didn’t have a specific place at the university.”

I asked Lori what her future plans are after she completes the program and she said, “I need a break but if someone offered me a job here I would stay wherever I get a job. Basically, Europe has better social system but if someone offers me a job in Australia I’m going.” I asked her if there was anything else she would like to share, as my interview questions were complete. She said, “Yes, a feeling I have, it makes me feel bad that it’s so expensive for UAF to pay for my school then they don’t want me to stay here? Even if I can’t reimburse them immediately I would like to give something back to them.”

Also, when I asked Lori she said she knew of an international student who may be interested in participating in my research and said she would email me the contact

information of her friend after confirming she was interested. It is because of Lori that I had the opportunity to work with Eileen.

4.5 Eileen's Interview

Eileen was the last out of fourteen interviews I conducted for this study. We met in the Speaking Center in the Gruening Building. It was a cold day in the beginning of December so the weather created a neutral ground for which we could start communicating. Eileen is from an urban area in the Netherlands which she approximated to have 300, 000 people residing in the area. She originally came to Alaska in 2001 while conducting research at the Masters level for a university in the Netherlands. Specifically, she conducted her Master's research in Alaska and had the opportunity to pass through Fairbanks on her way up North. This prepared her for the second time she would encounter Alaska, January 2013.

She expected the area of Fairbanks to be cold because of her previous research in Alaska, but was worried that she would not find a place to stay for her and her husband. Campus housing was full, so Eileen was left to search on websites such as Craigslist:

I looked at dry cabins and Toyo stoves but I didn't even know what a Toyo stove was you know what I mean? All these things I know now that you need: where you get food, that you need a car, where you get a car and how expensive it is. It was hard to find out from so far away the bus schedule and how to use it. Once here you get folders and people tell you, but at home it's different. It's harder to find information.

When she first arrived in Fairbanks, Eileen reported it was “dark and cold.” She had asked a friend if they knew of anyone she could stay with for a short period of time. Eileen made contact with the family “and they picked me up. We clicked until August until my husband got here and then I found housing on campus.” Eileen mentioned that once she encountered Fairbanks, she noticed that public transportation system here was limited compared to the Netherlands where “students have free public transportation or use a bike. You can go anywhere you want. Different here you can’t take the bus after seven p.m. if you want a beer when visiting someone.” While acknowledging the travel limits, she also thought that, “proximity of friends is nicer in Fairbanks compared to back home that takes one and a half hours to travel between cities.” When Eileen attended the orientation she felt “overwhelmed” with all of the information. She shared that it was hard not being able to speak Dutch, “When you get here you have to make switch it takes a long time to think of word or there is no word, no translation. It’s tiring.”

When I asked Eileen what she thought about the power distance at UAF compared to her university back home she replied:

Smaller scale at UAF. Back home you are just a number. You don’t have an office even if you are a Masters student, just work at library. You can address your professor, but 200 people are in class so you don’t really do that. Back home three hours lecture, three hours working in smaller groups, which is nice. You can ask questions and stuff which is more informal. Back home not so many forms you need to fill out. Here so much stuff and you really need to talk to people to find stuff out. Here you are closer connected to grad school or department, where

. . . back home [I] wouldn't interact with higher powers in institution because I just didn't have to.

Eileen mentions the family that she stayed with when first coming to Fairbanks when I asked her who came to her mind when I said the word mentor. She mentions that it is because of this family she was able to buy a car and "snow tires and where to get them and they taught me how to do it myself." I asked Eileen what it was like when she first started her semester here at UAF, wondering if she would recall anyone who has mentored her in this setting and she said:

I had a really hard time in the beginning because I didn't understand a single thing and of course you have to speak English all the time and it takes a lot of energy.

It tires you and drains you. First couple weeks I was like what the hell am I doing here? I didn't have any friends or an office so I was outside of the student group too. Then I took classes and tried to connect and they were really nice and they helped me with questions. I didn't expect to do paperwork either you expect to do what you did at home. Once you know the system it's great the university takes care of you very well.

Once she started her classes for the semester and had the opportunity to get to know her fellow grad student colleagues and now they are friends in and out of the classroom, "Mostly because we were in graduate room together where graduate students have desks. No professors. We would share lunch and as grad students you bulk together." It was not necessary for me to ask Eileen what she planned on doing after she completes her program because she then shared:

It's hard for international students to stay here which none of us understand.

Because they pay for your education after you are done you can get optional training pay a fee and find a job in the field. There are really no options.

The next category of interviews I conducted were from Eastern Asian countries (with the exception of one), given to me via the snowball sampling efforts of my first participant, Lynn. She contacted her friends who are international students who have become her friends over the last year and it is because of these efforts that I conducted the next nine interviews. I will report here in the order with which they were conducted.

4.6 Michael's Interview

Michael is a man from Beijing. The interview was conducted in the early afternoon on a warm fall day in early September. He has been in Fairbanks for two years at the time of the interview and has had no previous experience with experiences abroad. He did not do any extensive research on the area and did not have many expectations "just a place, some people live here." He expected to see polar bears and the Aurora Borealis. Once he actually got to Fairbanks he described it as "countryside" in comparison to the big city in his home country. He arrived in July and reported the weather "was nice. It didn't get dark . . . Boring here, not much to do. People here are really kind. Back home people are under too much pressure. Here people walk past each other and smile; [they] take life slower." Michael said that compared to his educational experience back home, UAF had a lower power distance: "In China you can't ask questions. It's formal with professors. [I] can't be friends with professors; they are serious. [One must] keep distance between teacher and students."

Michael's university in China has a program at UAF and he came to the university with a group of other international students. When they arrived they had a Chinese graduate student to help: "[The] most important thing is that he understands the Chinese language." Michael mentioned that speaking English was "challenging" and having someone to communicate with in his native language gave him a "home feeling."

Michael also shared that this individual "takes them to Fred Meyer in his car, otherwise they would have to take a bus. He's like a big brother who helps us a lot." Michael said that he would stay here if he were offered a scholarship, but would otherwise "go somewhere else. It's just really cold here."

4.7 Nancy's Interview

I met Nancy for our interview in her department on a warm sunny day in the first week of September, mid-afternoon. She was finishing her lunch and we were the only two in the graduate study area of her department. There were no windows, but the environment was still comfortable. Nancy has been in Fairbanks for two years at the time of the interview. She reported that she was from an urban area of China compared to Fairbanks. She got accepted into her program August 24th, and then came right to Alaska. She didn't have time to prepare, her time was spent getting her visa in order. Nancy had a lack of time to prepare for her expectations traveling to Fairbanks. As a result of this, I asked her about her experience: "I did not have time to form expectations." When she arrived in the Fairbanks she described Fairbanks and the university as:

Fairbanks is a big place, less people than in China.. I don't have a car, so I had to take the bus for grocery, but that was the only place I could go because I didn't know anybody here. In winter [I] can't see anyone on the street. Where I am from [there are] always people on the street.

Her sense of the power distance back home compared to UAF is that it is lower here than in China: "People here are conservative, but classroom style [is] liberal. Student's gestures in class are whatever they want to do, even the way they sit with feet up or slouched over. In China you have to sit [the] same, no bathroom, no water. You can't play with your pencil." When I defined mentor and discussed the different kinds, Nancy named a fellow international student she met at orientation:

[An] International student . . . [a] graduate student, who had lots of experience. She had been up here for few years. I didn't know what kind of food to buy, so she helped me, drove me to the store. I want to pursue happiness not just focus on thesis and research all the time. I followed her like she was my mother. I relied on her emotionally very much. She supports me all of the time. We support each other. With her it was easy to get to know each other because we spoke in Chinese together. We met the first day I arrived on campus and see each other at least twice a month to go to the grocery store, and both agree we are close friends, but are not the kind of people that have to be together all the time.

When I asked her what her future plans were, Nancy reported, "I don't want to stay, even though I have friends and a boyfriend. I need outdoor activity it's too cold

here. It's a good place, but not suitable for me." Lynn introduced me to Anthony, my next interviewee.

4.8 Anthony's Interview

I met Anthony for the interview at the beginning of September. It was a warm, sunny day and we met in the Speaking Center mid-afternoon. Anthony is from Mongolia and spent time in an urban area primarily because "the education is better," with summers in a more rural setting, riding horses with his extended family. He has been in Fairbanks for three years at the time of the interview. When I asked him how he prepared for his experience abroad he said his experience watching T.V. shows gave him the perception that there would be attractive women like "in Las Vegas." He reported not expecting anything, but knew Fairbanks was a rural area.

When Anthony arrived in Fairbanks he observed, "Western expectations are different."

He told me about his strategy for figuring out the culture at UAF:

When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. Mimic to become part of [the] in-group. [I] took English classes back home for three years, in real life it's actually different. [It's] so cold in Fairbanks, it's terrible. It's also shocking that it's dark all the time, but now I expect it so it's not so shocking. [The] weather was nice when I got here, but once winter set in I noticed how buildings here are very isolated. Taking a bus when [there was] no snow, was okay, but when it snows it delays a lot and you have to wait for an hour sometimes. I didn't expect much, [I] just focused on going to America. [The] language barrier was my biggest challenge. First, I thought I would only be friends with Mongolian students, but

now I'm friends with everybody. At first Mongolian groups were easier to communicate with, but eventually I became part of UAF culture from observing others.

When I asked Anthony how he perceived the power distance at UAF compared to his experience in Mongolia, his response was that "[the] blame is on students in Mongolia, at UAF, the blame is placed on the professor. I didn't know that you can go talk to [your] professor, or that it is expected here . . . it's not like that in Mongolia."

Anthony could only recall one individual when I said the word mentor after defining the term and providing examples:

My RA in [the] dorm first semester . . . was open and available. She spoke English. [The] RA would communicate back and forth, not just brush me off. I could tell when people couldn't understand me. Here, I was a fish out of water. Making friends here was very difficult. I assumed because of my English pronunciation. That is how I felt, that people didn't want to spend the time making a connection. Here, after a project [I was] not friends with group members, but in Mongolia you would be friends for life. I mimicked others to decide on what was culturally acceptable.

When I asked Anthony what his future plans were he told me wherever the opportunity is. He did share that he gets the feeling about the people at UAF:

They want to hear when I get my degree I'm going back home. They won't help me apply for a job here that's for sure. If you get a degree here, you are more

qualified globally. That's the biggest offer you can get from UAF is mastering English which is critical if you want to get a good job.

4.9 Timothy's Interview

Timothy reported that he has primarily spent his life in urban areas of China, Beijing and Shanghai. Before coming to UAF he had had no prior exchange experience. This interview was conducted at the beginning of September at the UAF speaking center. It was mid-afternoon and it was above average temperature for the time of year. At the time of the interview, Timothy reported that he had been in Fairbanks for three years. Timothy said that one of the things that prepared him the most for his exchange experience was learning the English language from an early age:

English class starts at six years old, at least one to two classes every week.

English is as important as biology and physics. I didn't do any research on Fairbanks, just looked up academic achievements of University and ranked them internationally, [with] Canada, America, Australia. UAF had overall better academic rank. It doesn't matter what city you graduated from, but [what does matter is the] academic institution and major.

Timothy expected to see "lots of cities, like the lower forty-eight." Once he arrived in Fairbanks, Alaska he described the area as heaven:

Weather is different in Fairbanks than back home. In Beijing it's always crowded. We always think we have too many friends; we end up keeping these people away [when] we feel it's too noisy. Here in Fairbanks, though, I feel lonely, and I've never experienced that before. We come to lunch and dinner and

think who should I call to eat with me? In my hometown [there are] too many people to ask to go to lunch with you . . . [you] feel like you need time to yourself there.

Timothy believed the power distance at UAF compared to back in China is:

Totally different, which made it hard for me to get ‘inside’ at UAF. In Asia, we vary age to age. Even if someone is only one year older we think that the younger must respect older because the older takes care of [the] younger. Titles show difference back home in China. We respect teachers very, very much. In America some people peel [an] apple next to teacher and eat it, which couldn’t happen in China. One day they are your teacher and become like your father for the rest of your life. I think of my teachers as father figures who share their knowledge and show me how to work and become an adult. Back home, the higher one takes care of [the] lower one. Here, my professor talks with me like we are the same age. It makes it hard for me to communicate and to share.

Timothy shared his mentoring experience:

[I met a]Senior PHD student who did everything good. [He] studied hard, did everything well. Because he is older he takes care of me. It’s a tradition for new students coming here to automatically have a PHD student to help them. Everyone follows a senior student. I see my mentor at least one or two times a week, always talk face to face each week.

Timothy specified the professor he considered [to be a] mentor as well. His Chinese advisor for his Master’s degree, who he considers a father, “Introduced me to his wife

and family and let me join in his family immediately. [He] called me to eat dinner every week. It would be weird if an American teacher asked a student that. [A] Chinese professor invites me to the park with his kids, to go traveling, fishing and thinks of my future and career a lot. If he wants me to do anything in relation to my future I respect his advice and do it.

Timothy said it is “easier to share and communicate in [the] Chinese language.” Future plans for Timothy were ranked in the order of most desirable such as Government (#1), design (#2) “Huge amounts of buildings, earn huge amount of money,” academic teacher (#3) “American professor is better (Earning is better) or Construction.”

4.10 John’s Interview

The next interview was conducted on the same day as Timothy’s, again in the UAF speaking center in the middle of the afternoon on a sunny day. John is a 22-year-old man from the urban area of Beijing, the capital of China. At the time of the interview, John had been in Fairbanks for one year. He prepared for his experience abroad by searching Internet and magazines. When John arrived in Fairbanks he shared, “The first week was hard for me, pronunciation and organizing sentences I felt were bad, I felt embarrassed to talk with my teacher or my American friends.”

The power distance at UAF compared to John’s experience in Beijing is lower than he is used to. “I thought ‘this is unbelievable’. In China I can’t say ‘hey come here.’ It’s not as surprising now that time has gone by to call [professor] by their first name.”

John explained his experience with mentors:

First my Chinese friend who is older is someone I think of as a mentor. We came from the same Chinese University. In China we have communication software (like msn), which allowed me to talk to a friend who was already at UAF on instant messaging about what to expect for weather, what to wear at -40.

I then asked John how frequently he and his mentor communicate with each other:

About once, twice a week depending on my situation. Sometimes I have questions on homework or what professor is better, suggestions about class.

Older students always help us. [It] became a tradition to help younger new students because we came from same university. This is the way the relationship develops, older help younger which is the tradition in China.

Timothy's future plans include: Master or PHD "depends on what University gives me admission. I would stay here but my girlfriend is in NY State so my plan is to go to mainland."

4.11 Travis' Interview

Travis is a man from an urban area of northeast China, Shiyang. At the time of the interview, he had been in Fairbanks for four years. It was a late morning interview on an overcast day in mid-September. Travis reported that he has moved a lot in China, so he thought he could easily adapt to any situation. As a result of this, he did little to prepare for his experience in Fairbanks.

According to Travis, there are so many people in in his hometown, he then specifies, "about eight million." Travis was "shocked about how there weren't many people . . . here when I came." It was unnecessary for me to ask Travis about his

encounter experience of the area because he answered the question as part of the expectation question. Travis indicated that:

Here at UAF there is less distance. In china we don't talk to professors a lot.

Since we don't talk to professors in China we don't always remember their names. Here there is more individual one on one communication with professor.

They may know more about you than professor in china.

Travis discussed mentoring with an example about his twin brother: "I have a twin brother in Fairbanks, who goes to UAF too. We talk and help each other discuss problems. We also live together so I see him every day." Travis did not think of anyone else when I mentioned the word mentor in relation to his experience at UAF.

When Travis leaves Alaska he stated that: "Either grad school or [a] good job. I'll try to find a job not in Alaska. If I live in one place too long I get bored."

4.12 Ian's Interview

"Ian" is a man from a more "rural" area of Sweden "5,000 people out in the woods." At the time of the interview, Ian has been in Fairbanks for 2 years. It was a rainy day at the end of September at nine o' clock in the morning. Ian had no real expectations of the area. However, he stated his experience on rifle team was, "Very focused . . . I knew it would be cold, just like home." When he encountered Fairbanks, Ian found out that, "If you really need to get somewhere you need a vehicle. The bus system is unreliable."

When I asked Ian about his perception of power distance at UAF compared to back home in Sweden, he thought that UAF had a higher power distance:

When you start studying English you are taught to call people Mr. or Mrs. and their last name. We never do that. UAF is different than many other schools because here you can just walk into an office and chat on a first name basis, but others want you to call them Dr. or professor. So, I think there is a greater distance here than in Sweden, but I never attended a university in Sweden.

Teachers in high school, I would just talk to them by first name [to] ask questions.

Ian listed his mentors in the order as follows:

(a) My Rifle coach, I had a whole team of people helping, so I made the decision to help the new people. My coach makes sure I maintain grades to be eligible to compete and that I feel good, practice, and get good sleep. He's been there from the start. He invites the team to his house for barbeques with his family.

(b) Office of international programs, they are amazing they help with anything. If you want help you can get help with anything. I contacted them prior to my arrival several times. Really, really friendly. That makes a big difference if you are uncomfortable speaking English and they know what its like.

(c) My history professor, [we had an] ongoing discussion on what career I want to pursue. I took his class my very first semester. I still meet him on campus sometimes.

Ian was not sure of his future plans as "I still have two years, depending on how I shoot will determine how I decide what I'm going to do after. I don't think UAF offers Masters Programs [that] I'm interested in."

4.13 Kyle's Interview

Kyle is a Chinese man from a city of 11 million people from one of the top five urban areas in China. He came to Fairbanks in 2007 and spent one year at a local high school. The interview was conducted at the 24-hour study area of the library in the early afternoon at the participant's suggestion. There were many students in this area of the library and once the interview started, I found it challenging to be as comfortable as I usually was in the privacy of the UAF Speaking Center.

Kyle said he expected "it would be cold but it feels colder in China because it's more wet." Once he encountered the area of Fairbanks, Kyle thought, "There was not . . . many things to do, so I stayed home a lot." When I defined power distance and provided examples, Kyle responded, "Because of [the] culture in China, you treat your teachers like your father or mother. You can't joke or something with them." When I asked about the idea of who was a mentor to him, he replied, "Daniel, I'm in same major with him. He is one year ahead of me. I see him every day; we are almost the same age." Kyle said for his future plans he would "probably" stay at UAF to work if offered an opportunity.

4.14 Mikhaela's Interview

Mikhaela is a 25-year-old woman who is a Chinese international student from the urban area of Beijing. Her primary language is Mandarin, which she said has a "totally different language system compared to English." She has been here for four years, a two-year bachelor's, and two year master program. It was uncharacteristically warm in the beginning of November, and Mikhaela just defended her thesis and was returning home in two days. When asked about her preparation for Fairbanks she said she watched

National geographic and anticipated lots of animals: “I was a little afraid here (of wildlife) and it is really cold with no sunshine temperature.”

Mikhaela found out about UAF through a Chinese University geological engineering program. Mikhaela expressed surprise when she encountered the culture of Fairbanks:

I was really surprised, really beautiful. I came here in July and seen sunshine, trees and flowers. People here are really friendly. If they don't know you and see you they will smile and say 'how are you doing?' People in Beijing treat you like you have some problem. Alaska is my best experience because here the people are really friendly.

When I explained power distance to Mikhaela she offered that:

In China . . . [the cultural members] view professors as upper level and you are down here. They are very serious and don't have much time to talk to each student because there are so many students. Each teacher has about 100 students, so we don't have much communication with professors in Chinese university. Here at UAF, my advisor from Taiwan [is] really friendly helps us a lot. He was assigned to me because we speak the same language. [He] asks us to dinner once a semester to talk not only about school problems but living problems. [He] takes us places [and is] really friendly. We call him Brandon, not Doctor or Professor. [The] environment in class is different too. You can ask lots of questions and the teachers are friendly. In China can't ask questions at any time and interrupt. Every semester for . . . dinner, four to five other students go too. At dinner we

speak in Mandarin, totally Chinese. I want to speak Chinese to Chinese, but sometimes I think I came here to perfect my English. They just want to practice English in a primarily English-speaking environment. My department assigned my mentor because we spoke [the] same language.

When I asked Mikhaela how often she visits her mentor she mentioned they had:

Contact [with] each other two times a week and we work in the same building on campus. He likes to listen but won't spread information. I talk about my personal business and I will tell him 'don't tell anyone' and I don't hear it from others.

When I asked Mikhaela about going home she said that:

It's hard for international students to get a job here after the program is complete. I already found a job at Chinese university as an International Officer to deal with international students coming to Beijing.

I added an extra layer to my interview data by organizing it into demographic categories (figure 4.1) as shown below.

*Columns will not sum to 100%, as multiple responses were possible and coded for.

East Formal 1	West Formal 0	Male Formal 1	Female Formal 0
East Informal 10	West Informal 9	Male Informal 9	Female Informal 12

Power Distance Higher at UAF Compared to Home: West 3	Power Distance Higher at UAF Compared to Home: East 0	Short Term (Less than two years in Fairbanks) Informal Mentoring 9	Short Term (Less than two years in Fairbanks) Formal Mentoring 2
Power Distance lower at UAF compared to back home: West 2	Power Distance higher at UAF compared to back home: East 9	Long Term (two years or longer in Fairbanks) Informal Mentoring 11	Long Term (two years or longer in Fairbanks) Formal Mentoring 2

Figure 4.1 Summary of the data

The interviews were organized using the organizational socialization phases: (a) anticipation, (b) assimilation, and (c) exit as well as power differentials in mentoring. This helped tell their story in a way that stayed accurate to their own experiences.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Coded Descriptors

After all 14 interviews were conducted, I began my analysis in order to address my research questions. At this stage of qualitative research, there are multiple ways that data can be analyzed. I used coding which allowed me to assign key words to sections of my interviews to have them organized by a descriptor word of that particular area of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I found that coding the information allowed me to organize each individual's socialization experience into the different phases as specified by Jablin in 2001. Doing so enabled me to find, if any, consistencies among interviews and share the experiences of international students. The six codes selected that best represented the data were Jablin's organizational socialization phases of (a) anticipation, (b) assimilation, (c) exit; Hofstede's cultural dimension of power distance and the importance of mentoring relationships throughout the socialization process. The six codes formally addressed the research questions:

RQ1: How do international students identify and foster mentoring relationships when they come to UAF?

RQ2: What, if any, are additional challenges faced by international students when coming to college at UAF?

5.1.1 Preparation. We can see that preparation about the international experience is not about the area of Fairbanks per se, but the campus of UAF and the academic credentials. Six out of 14 participants reported that the information they gathered to prepare for their experience was about the university specifically. For

example one participant remarked, “I had choice between two Universities in [the] US. I read up on courses and looked at what would be more in my field of interest to pursue [for] my career” and another student shared: “[I] didn’t do any research on [the] area just academic achievements [at the] University ranking them internationally [from] Canada, America, [to] Australia. [UAF is] overall better academic rank. [It] doesn’t matter what city you graduated from, but [the] academic institution major [does count].”

The channels of information international students used to conceptualize the area of Fairbanks, Alaska were not an accurate resource to realistically inform them of the acclimated weather conditions. Nine out of the 14 participants reported watching television and movies shot in Alaska and the international students realized when they got to Fairbanks “it’s not very representative.” These resources create a particular set of expectations. Jablin (2001) suggests organizations should consider the information that new hires receive from their prospective employers prior to beginning work and how these messages may affect their initial job/organization expectation and attitudes. This is a great opportunity for organizations to create a positive and welcoming atmosphere for incoming students who have not lived in Fairbanks. As Eileen suggested, “It would be awesome if there would be a manual they would send you written by an international student or a new student before you actually get here.”

5.1.2 Expectations. Five out of 14 international students reported that they did not have any standard set of expectation about the area of Fairbanks. According to Anthony, “Not many expectations “just a place, some people live.” This is contrary to the reports on actually experiencing Fairbanks and trying to get settled into a new climate

and the natural elements that go along with that transition. Finding housing, transportation, paperwork upon arrival and getting food to eat are just a few essentials international students encounter immediately that cause some to feel overwhelmed and uncertain in a new place.

5.1.3 Encounter. The encounter phase seems to cause feelings of communication apprehension for incoming international students. Jablin (2001) stated apprehension is characteristic during this phase of organizational socialization because individual's experience, "High levels of uncertainty, surprise, discrepancies between expectations and reality" (p. 758). Four out of 14 participants who reported on linguistic components such as translation reported this apprehension and pronunciation would be viewed negatively by their peers at UAF, but Timothy found the opposite effect when he stated that the "First week [was] hard for me. Pronunciation and organizing sentence bad, I feel embarrassed to talk with my teacher or my American friends I think it would be really bad, but friends said 'Oh no good sentence you can do it well.'"

Here is an example of a comment made by Eileen who makes the encounter phase seem like an overwhelming and unsure time for international students: "I had a really hard time in the beginning because I didn't understand a single thing. At orientation, tell you all this stuff give you all this stuff. Who can even concentrate that long?"

David shared his experience of his encounter phase and the challenges he faced: "Language barrier [is] biggest challenge. I felt the same pain once my English became better, other international students who are new to campus. I felt for them." Hofstede (2001) explained the notion that, "Having to express oneself in another language means

having to adopt someone else's frame of reference" (p. 425). So, it is not just about translating vocabulary words but changing the way one thinks and communicates as well. Hofstede (2001) cautions that, "If one does not know the language of one's country of residence, one misses the subtleties of the culture and is forced to remain a relative outsider, caught in stereotypes" (p. 425). Reducing disconnectedness between learning a language and incorporating it into everyday life is a way to make newcomers feel a part of a culture. Travis shared his encounter experience when he stated: "In Beijing [it is] always crowded, always thinking we have too much friends. Keep these people away too noisy. Here [I] feel lonely, never experience before lots of times . . . We come to lunch dinner who should I call to eat with me? In home town too many people ask for lunch with you and may feel like you need time to yourself there." When the winter months had international students experiencing the harsh temperatures and long periods of darkness, John reported, "feeling isolated . . . here not too many things to play [so I] stay home."

Lack of reliable transportation seemed to be a reoccurring response when asked about encountering Fairbanks. Six out of 14 international students discussed lack of public transportation available in the Fairbanks area. For example, Michael expressed, "If you really need to get somewhere you need a vehicle. Bus system [is] unreliable . . . I don't have a car. [I] take the bus for grocery but that was the only place I can go because I didn't know anybody here. Taking a bus when no snow, but when snow it delays a lot and have to wait for an hour sometimes."

5.1.4 Power Distance. Whether the power distance at UAF was perceived to be higher or lower in comparison to the international students' hometown, students had to make an adjustment with the way they were formally used to talking to their professors. Hofstede (2001) posits that, "Different norms may apply within groups and between groups in society" (p.84), allowing for more than one power structure to exist in an overall culture.

Three out of five Western European international students reported the power distance at UAF was higher compared to back home. Joyce explained that, "You would never call anyone Dr. it's just weird" and nine out of nine international students from Eastern Asian cultures reported the power distance is lower at UAF. For example, Lynn said, "In Asia, we very difference age to age only one age older we think younger respect older, older take care of younger. Titles to make different." So although there may be a larger distance between students and their professors, they conceptualize this relationship as "I think of teacher as father, knowledge and how to work and become people. Higher one will take care of lower one."

5.1.5 Mentor. Informal mentor relationships were the most frequently articulated type of mentors within my research. Twenty-one informal mentorship relationships were mentioned. Mentors were frequently referred to as family members such as Lynn explains, "You don't have to report to her or anything "She's there to help you, like a mom, less pressure." Timothy also offers an example of his mentoring experience, "At first he's like a big brother [who] helps us a lot the way he treated us. I see him every week almost play basketball together. Class work and social. He gives us a home

feeling.” Jablin (2001) specifies the importance of this type of mentor, “It appears that mentors are most instrumental in providing newcomers with information about the organization domain (for instance, information about organizational power and politics, history, culture” (p. 768). Based on Jablin’s assertion, informal mentor relationships seem to be most important form of mentoring when getting socialized into a new organization.

Another interaction that took place amongst international students is the notion of how one gets to the grocery store and who will show them how to get groceries. According to Nancy, “I didn’t know what kind of food to buy she helped me, took me to the store. Traditions for new students coming here we automatically have a PHD student. Everyone will follow senior student. I actually became a senior student; because he helped [I] wanted to help too and did with younger students. New students don’t have car, take to store so at least once a week, go to lunch, cooking.” It seems that within some international student’s cohorts the tradition of informal mentoring is already implemented and successful in helping students feel like they have familiarities of home in a new environment.

Only one formal mentorship relationship was mentioned however, several interviewees indicated an informal process of mentoring. This mentor relationship was purposeful as well, as the student and professor spoke the same language such as a Chinese student and Chinese advisor. Anthony shares an example of how he views his mentor, “Like father, introduced me to wife, family let me join in his family immediately. Chinese professor invites me to park with kids, traveling, fishing and thinks of my future

and career a lot. Easier to share communicate in Chinese language.” Nancy stated that, “Just over time nothing that specifically happened just got more comfortable the more we talk about project and how I feel being here as international, future, I talk more to him he understand what’s going on.” Mentoring relationship seemed to develop on an informal level once the international student and mentor could interact outside of an academic environment. Meeting family and sharing experiences was an important bond forming opportunity for these individuals. “Helped develop relationship over time “made a big difference” invited your shared special thing away from university to meet family less pressure.”

5.1.6 Exit Phase. Seven out of 14 international students were willing to stay at UAF, “If the opportunity presented itself” as stated by Eileen. This was the only affirmative answer for international students to stay in Fairbanks or the community upon completion of their program. Five out of 14 believed that support to find a job in the area after graduation is scarce, but as a researcher I wonder if the perception is misplaced. Jablin (2001) supports, “It is important to recognize that different kinds of social support may be required from different sources and the ‘failure’ of the right sources to provide appropriate kinds of support for the target will yield problematic results” (p. 791). It may be due to visa constraints and guidelines that there is a perceived lack of support for future endeavors for international students. If so, that should be something that is made transparent, thus misperceptions of being unwelcome will be deterred. Anthony mentioned, “They want to hear when I get my degree I’m going back home. They won’t help me apply for jobs here that for sure.” Eileen questioned her departure from UAF, “I

thought as an international you have this incredible opportunity nobody does that back home and when you are done here they are like we are done with you, you can just go home. Don't you want me to stay here and work and kind of reimburse what you gave me?"

A review of data suggests a strong connection to my research questions. The phases of organizational socialization appear to fit well with the responses I received during my interviews.

5.2 Discussion

Yes, international students face additional challenges unique both to language and culture as well as institutional adjustments but the adjustments are made and mentoring relationships clearly help that adjustment. I will organize this section in particular to three domains, communication, UAF and international students.

5.2.1 Conclusions that Relate to Communication. Language “families” created a way to have an immediate form of familiarity, which encourages communicating with other students that speak the same native language. The power distance of students’ home culture had more of a bearing on communication style, because it affects the way that students approach individuals at UAF. While everyone knows how to research the organization of UAF, many people research the culture of the U.S. in general, only to discover Alaska is sufficiently different that their understanding feels insufficient. If an international student has someone to communicate with right away in their native language when they arrive in Fairbanks, it does serve as a form of support. Although relationships may form at a slower rate due to linguistic differences, it does not

completely impede the ability of international students to form mentoring relationships. This shows that even with cultural and linguistic differences, alternate communication styles can work equally well together. These challenges that mentor and mentee overcome can potentially increase the overall quality of the relationship.

5.2.2 Conclusions Related to UAF. Although students may have thought their language was not up to par, the mentors (whether informal or formal) at UAF offered enough support to help the international student. Overall, there is no pattern dictating whether international students pick various mentors or a single form of support that is needed across the board.

5.2.3 Conclusions Related to International Students. As for getting socialized in to the culture of UAF, it is important to have a mentor who is skilled at adapting across cultures. Since there is a certain amount of social accommodation for any two individuals, mentor and mentee do not need to originate from same cultures. What we mean by international communication competence is becoming aware of variables on power distance, individualism and collectivism and familiar enough with it that they are not stuck in one dichotomy. Socialization processes still take place largely through face-to-face networking through informal mentorship. Providing international students with a brochure as suggested by one, would potentially reduce certain surprise elements upon their arrival to Fairbanks. These conclusions are drawn from my research relating to international students' experience abroad but may suggest that some of these solutions could apply to all students at all universities.

5.3 Future Implications

There are weaknesses regarding this project that could be adapted for future research. Retroactive recollection of life experiences while valid can be problematic. Researcher reporter bias on oneself may be skewed in relation to one's perception of self or experience or the fact that the amount of time that passed varied between two weeks in Fairbanks to Four years. I also thought about the sample population for this study and wondered what it would look like if the snowball sampling went differently. It would be interesting to see data compiled from particular departments and see if informal mentorships were articulated at the same rate.

5.4 Limitations

For the purposes of this particular study, I did not include gender as part of my primary study. My previous course work in the communication discipline did allow me to become aware of communication issues regarding gender and future research expanding on that in relation to this study would be relevant and insightful to see if the rate that participants disclosed had anything to do with gender.

Jablin's (2001) organizational socialization phases were coded and analyzed as well as Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension of power distance along with supporting evidence from interviews. This research has explored mentoring as a key component to the success of international students. This qualitative research is just a small selection of personal reports, yet the depth of their experience cannot be denied. Often times, qualitative research is criticized as only anecdotal evidence. The epistemology of qualitative research contrasts the counter argument that the thick description of

interviewees' stories gives us a better understanding of entry and exit through the phases of organizational socialization.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Intercultural Mentoring: how exchange students identify and foster key socialization relationships

IRB #: 462361-1

Date Approved: June 10, 2013

Description of the Study: You are being asked to take part in a research study exploring your experiences identifying and developing mentor relationships. The goal of this study is to learn how ESL students working in a new cultural environment find the people you turn to for help. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an ESL student at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and because your insights can be valuable to other exchange students and the institution. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked a series of 8-10 questions with follow up s for clarification as necessary. I will record the interview using my digital Flipcam, and transcribe the verbal component. These files will be preserved on my password-protected computer only for as long as the study is ongoing. You may withdraw from participation at any time, and you may also ask to stop the recording at any time. If you wish to withdraw from participation after the interview is completed, simply contact myself (Ms. Elizabeth Rossi at earossi@alaska.edu) or the PI, my advisor Dr. Karen Taylor (kmtaylor4@alaska.edu or call 907-474-6818).

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: There are no known risks to you if you take part in this study. The possible benefits are that we might be able to better serve future ESL students, and we might better understand some of the conditions that contribute to success in socialization across cultures.

We do not guarantee that you will benefit from taking part in this study.

We do not guarantee that every change you suggest will be implemented.

Confidentiality: Any information with your name attached will not be shared with anyone outside of myself and my advisor. Recordings will be kept only for the duration of the study, and will be stored on a password-protected computer. The data derived from this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but you will not be individually identified without being asked separately for permission.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to take part in the study you can stop at any time or change your mind and ask to be removed from the study. No matter what you decide, now or later, nothing will happen to you as a result.

Contacts and Questions: If you have questions now, feel free to ask me now. If you have questions later, you may contact myself or Dr. Karen Taylor. My e-mail address is earossi@alaska.edu, and my office phone number is 907-474-1876.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the UAF Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (toll-free outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

Statement of Consent: I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

Signature of Participant & Date:

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Demographics:

1. What is your age?
 2. What is your Primary language?
 3. What is your gender?
 4. Would you describe your Hometown as, urban/rural (city/country)
 5. Do you have family members who have pursued a college education?
 6. How long have you been in Fairbanks?
 7. What had you done prior to arriving in Fairbanks, AK to prepare yourself for this experience?
 8. Did you research and read about the area? What were your sources of information?
 9. What expectations about AK did you form on the basis of television shows, movies, or books you may have read prior to arriving here?
- (What information sources are trusted)
10. What was [it like] when you first arrived in Alaska? [encounter phase]
 11. What did you think about Fairbanks when you arrived?
 12. What did you find different about AK than you had expected?

TRANSITION INTO POWER DISTANCE

- Brief explanations of power distance
- Cultural power distance defined: (Hofstede's cultural dimensions)

- High power distance: direct separation between bosses and their workers or students. The leader is not challenged or corrected and makes the decisions for the whole group.
- Low power distance: it is acceptable to correct and challenge leaders, where all members are involved in decision making process

13. As you became settled into UAF, what do you notice about differences in power and authority compared to your university back home?

TRANSITION INTO MENTORING

- Define what mentoring is
- Mentoring: no set agreed upon operational definition, but includes the following relational characteristics:
 - (A) a more experienced person guiding other persons
 - (B) the intent is for professional and personal development
 - (C) where the mentor and mentee share a personal connection that both learn new things and support one another
 - (D) the involvement is not limited to a specific curriculum or limited to an academic calendar (semester/year)
- Multiple mentors for different aspects of life
 - Examples of mentoring
 - Formal mentoring programs
 - Informal

- Co-mentoring
- Different department mentoring
- Anchoring mentors
- Department mentors
- MENTORSHIP relationships
 - How we distinguish among them.
 - Task or relational experience or BOTH

14. Do you feel as though you have someone here that mentors you?

15. How long did it take to find your mentor?

16. How did you find your mentor?

17. What have you done to develop the relationship with your mentor?

18. How much did you decide to disclose with your mentor and how did you go about deciding?

19. How often do you contact your mentor?

20. Anticipatory future, what are your long term goals?

21. Do you want to return home upon completion of your exchange program?

22. Do you want to stay in Fairbanks, AK?

23. Would you like to go elsewhere?

24. What experiences have you had with other exchange programs?

(Could influence adaptation)